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Ralph B. Young (MBA, 1973) Western Canadian Collection

> "To the future students and researchers who share an appreciation for our proud history and heritage"

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# TWO CENTURIES OF FUR-TRADING

1723 - 1923

ROMANCE OF THE REVILLON FAMILY



MARCEL SEXÉ

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#### A Monsieur MARCEL SEXÉ.

Vous me direz, sans doute, mon cher Ami, que je ne puis être à la fois juge et partie. Et, cependant, il me semble que le livre que vous allez faire paraître apportera sur l'Industrie de la fourrure, en général, et sur les mœurs des Indiens, des Esquimaux et des peuplades asiatiques, des documents inédits et savoureux.

Je me permettrai seulement de vous faire le petit reproche d'avoir parlé avec trop d'éloges de la Famille REVILLON : il est vrai que ce livre s'adresse surtout à nos Amis.

Maintenant, je vous demanderai, à mon tour, de reporter une partie de ces éloges sur nos collaborateurs dont le dévouement nous a été si précieux, aussi bien à l'Étranger qu'en France. N'est-ce pas grâce à eux, en effet, que nous avons pu nous installer dans les parages mêmes de la terre de Baffin, que nos pionniers ont pénétré en plein pays turkmène, jusqu'aux

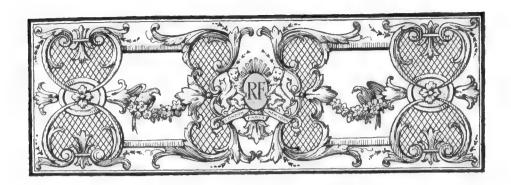
confins de l'Afghanistan, et n'est-ce pas avec eux encore que, descendant l'Iénisséi, nous avons atteint l'Océan glacial Arctique?

Il me tient à cœur de signaler également que les Gouvernements Britannique, Américain et surtout Canadien, en nous accordant partout le "fair play", nous ont toujours donné l'appui le plus courtois et le plus bienveillant.

Enfin, je formule le vœu que celui de mes arrière-petits-enfants qui assistera au tricentenaire, puisse trouver un historiographe de votre compétence et de votre talent pour raconter en 2023, les nouveaux progrès de notre Maison et de notre industrie.

Croyez, mon cher Ami, à mes sentiments les meilleurs et les plus dévoués.

VICTOR REVILLON



### FUR AND FASHION



HE idea that the present craving for furs is a modern fashion is entirely a misconception. In all times, from the days of Adam and Eve, the fancy for furs has been limited only by the cost of this adornment. For adornment has been generally the motive for the

wearing of furs to a much greater degree than protection from the rigours of winter.

The nomad tribes who wandered between the Ural Mountains and the mouth of the Danube used little else than the skins of beasts for clothing. But in ancient Rome furs were a favourite garb among the patricians. The fashion was introduced by the Gauls and rapidly developed to such an extent that the fur dealers travelled as far north as Scandinavia and the northern coast of the Baltic in their search for sable and marten skins. Luxurious Byzantium drew its supplies of rich pelts, including the royal ermine, from the Chersonese and Cappadocia.

In the France and England of the Middle Ages the popularity of furs rose to such a height in emulation of the example of kings and nobility that with a view of preventing extravagance or, more probably, in order to restrict the

use to the upper classes, many edicts were issued, restraining the sale of furs.

In the course of the twelfth century the demand for fur became an absolute craze. Those who could not afford the valuable Siberian or Armenian furs, wore the skins of lamb, hare, dog or cat. By the use of dyes, the natural colour of furs was changed. Skins with white hair, in particular, were generally dyed red, and to this day their name of "gules" is found in heraldic terminology to describe the colour red.

At this period was introduced the use of fur blazons. The origin of blazons dates from the time of the Crusades when each leader, commanding soldiers of many different nationalities, was obliged to wear a sign by which his troops could recognise him. When he returned from the Holy Land, he retained these signs or blazons and handed them down to his descendants as a title of honour for the knightly feats he had accomplished. Hence came the inclusion of terms relating to furs in the language of heraldry. Thus



King Louis XI.

we find "gules" or furs dyed red, standing for the colour red; sable standing for black, ermine for white, and "vair", or squirrel fur, for brown.

Fashionable folk in mediæval times, like their descendants of the present day, donned furs in summer as well as in winter. Ermine and squirrel were the favourite summer wear; sable and marten were reserved for cold weather.

Time after time in the course of the thirteenth century, French Kings endeavoured with more or less success to regulate the use of fur clothing in accordance with the rank of the wearers. For a long time, commoners were denied the right of wearing any of the rich furs; the use of sable, ermine and vair was confined to the nobles. An edict dated 1294 specified "dresses lined with ermine for ladies; dresses lined with catskin for the wives of burgesses".

The extraordinary demand for furs during the thirteenth century caused prices to soar to heights which to-day seem almost incredible. For example, fifty squirrel skins cost 100 francs, which is equivalent to 6,000 francs in present currency. But extravagant prices did not, in mediæval times any more than to-day, effectually check the desire of men and women to acquire objects of luxury; and in Louis XI's day, men's caps were usually trimmed with fur.

The introduction into France of fine velvet and silk cloths threatened the vogue of fur to some degree,

but the demand was revived in the early day of Francois I. who reigned from 1515 to 1547. Extravagance became so rampant that the king, in 1518. issued a severe edict absolutely forbidding the importation of articles of luxury except by special authority.



King François Ist and Queen Claude de France

This law, however, had a political rather than a sumptuary aim. A French navigator, Jacques Cartier, had just discovered Canada, and, impressed by the immense quantity of fur-bearing animals found in the new land, he had obtained from François I. the privilege of constituting the French pioneers he had left in Canada as a company — the "Compagnie du Canada" — and the king desired to support the new colony.



The Muff fashion under Louis XIII.

After François I. fur garments lost some of their vogue by reason of edicts and regulatory laws against their use. In the reign of Henri III. (from 1559 to 1589) the muff was invented, made of silk or velvet and lined with fur. But with the coming of the Medici



Fur dress , of the time of King Louis XIV.

family into France through roval marriages, Italian modes were introduced and fur fell into neglect. Also the ruin wrought by the Wars of Religion hampered all luxury industries. However the trade in furs still kept a place in French commerce, and when Champlain set out for Canada on 1603 in his memorable journey to found Ouebec, Henri IV. granted the explorer letters patent for fur trading. At a later period, Cardinal Richelieu, the chief minister of Louis XIII.. contrived with the help of a few wealthy financiers to reorganise the company established by François I., and it became "La Compagnie des Associés pour le Commerce des Pelleteries". The

Cardinal was the director of the Company in France, while Champlain was his manager in Canada.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes drove out of France practically all the French cutters, belonging as they did to the Protestant Church. This inflicted a severe blow on the trade, but the fashion for furs continued. About 1692 the practice of carrying muffs became



Mary Leszczynska, Queen of France.

a positive infatuation among men as well as women; and it was considered very stylish for ladies to carry their lap-dogs in their muffs. At the same period the Princess Palatine, Charlotte-Elizabeth, the second wife of the brother of Louis XIV., introduced the mode of the fur cape, called "palatine", which survived until our grandmothers' day.

Attempts on the part of the State to regulate the fur business by sumptuary restrictions now ceased, and its efforts were concentrated on assisting the expansion of the numerous chartered companies which were formed to develop the resources of the new colony in North America. When Richelieu and Champlain reorganised the "Compagnie des Associés" in the seventeenth century, the British



Furs during the reign of Louis XVI.

Government had already founded their first fur-trading establishments on the American Continent, and in 1670 a company obtained from Charles II. important concessions of land in the north and north-west of Canada for the purpose of fur-trading, and, later on, this company became the Hudson Bay Company.

During the whole of the eighteenth century the rage for fur reigned supreme. Its fascination for men was as great as for women.

A story is found in contemporary chronicles of a coat worn by the Marquis de Stainville which was made of silk cloth lined with marten fur, the lining alone being valued at 50.000 francs.

The marriage of Louis XV. to the Polish princess, Maria Leszczynska, brought into vogue the fashions of Poland, and the "hongreline" or frogged fur bodice became the rage. Unbridled luxury in aristocratic circles was the hall-mark of this reign. Some gossip of the time states that in February 1770 the Duchesse de Chartres went to the Opera Ball in a sable cloak of double fur inside and out, with a train over two yards long. With the advent of Louis XVI. a simple style of apparel came in, and it was no longer good form to display extravagance in dress. Perhaps the breath of the coming Revolution with its death, ruin or exile, was already felt by the fashionable.

Under the ancient system of government the fur trade, dealing only with the higher ranks of Society, was confined to merchants who enjoyed a privileged position. As early as 1346 the Parisian fur-dealers obtained from the King laws and privileges which were confirmed in succeeding

reigns: in 1367 by Charles V., in 1583 and 1586 by Henri III., in 1618 by Louis XIII, and in 1648 by Louis XIV.

These dealers were known under the various titles of Maîtres marchands-pelletiers, haubaniers, and fourreurs: pelletiers or fur dealers because they dealt in fur; haubaniers on account of a fee called "hauban" which in earlier days they paid to the King for permission to sell their wares in lots at the fairs and markets in Paris; and fourreurs because they lined with fur, or trimmed garments with hairy skins, and made muffs and other fur garments.

The guild of furriers had its confraternity in the Church of Carmes des Billettes. Its patron saint was the Holy Virgin, and the festival of the Corporation took place on

the Sunday of the Octave of the Holy Sacrament.

The furriers' community was originally the fourth of the six privileged guilds of merchants which composed the aristocracy of the Parisian trades. That is why they were seen at all official ceremonies, dressed in blue velvet doublet and hose, lined with lynx fur, bearing the royal dais when

the king and queen went forth on a State occasion. According to an edict of 1746, they joined the Hatters' and Hosiers' Corporation, and composed the third body of Merchants.

The bylaws of the Corporation were extremely strict, and the regulations connected with apprenticeship, companionship and entrance into the body of furriers were so complicated that scarcely any competition was possible. This feature naturally did not stimulate the development of the trade. On the other hand cus-



A Merveilleuse, ready for the ballroom, about 1800



tomers remained faithful from generation to generation to the same house. It was easy for a furrier to transmit his goodwill to his successor, and the furriers' firms sometimes endured more than a century. Amongst the oldest of the houses was the firm of GIVELET, one of the most important furriers in France, founded in 1723, and located at 159, Rue Saint-Honoré.

Following the gloomy days of the Revolution, this firm regained prosperity under the Directory. As always happens after times of crisis, a boundless passion for luxury seized the French people, and the fur trade largely benefited from the craze of the moment. It was at this period that M<sup>me</sup> Tallien called on Barras, wearing an ermine shawl so long and wide that her husband complained "it cost as much as all the rich dresses and gold-laced coats met with that night".

During the early wars of Napoleon all luxury trades were neglected. The fur trade, however, managed to maintain itself by supplying the army with astrakhan busbies for hussars and bearskin caps for grenadiers.



But as time went on, Dame Fashion regained her popularity, cloaks lined with sealskin called "witgchouras", introduced by Suvaroff, became the rage; also astrakhan or ermine bonnets which hid three-quarters of their wearers' faces; and a seal skin collar the "sentiment", chinchilla muffs and cloaks of swansdown.

In the prosperity that followed the advent of these brighter days the firm of GIVELET had its share, and was soon on the way to become the largest fur-dealing house in the world, when Victor REVILLON took its management in hand.

Born in 1806, Louis-Victor REVILLON was now thirty-three years old. His father, Count Louis-Victor d'Apreval, unable to face the exile of an émigré under the Revolution, changed his name, and as Louis-Victor REVILLON, bought a farm at Boissy Saint-Léger and worked it with his own hands. He was a young man of strong will power, and bravely fought his way through the difficulties that confronted an aristocrat turned farmer.

The story goes that one day, having gone to Paris to

sell the products of his farm, he attended the auction of his own estate, put up for sale in the Place de la Révolution by the Revolutionary Tribunal. In due course he married, and, by hard work, was able to support not only his eleven sons and one daughter, but also an adopted son.

At the Restoration a cousin, GUYOT DE VILLENEUVE, who had many connections at the court of Louis XVIII, and who greatly admired REVILLON'S pluck, gained an introduction to the King for him and his family. The monarch congratulated him on the size and appearance of his family, and granted him a sum of a thousand louis (20.000 francs) from his privy purse. From this circumstance Louis-Victor REVILLON was cunningly nicknamed "Mille-Louis" or "thousand Louis".

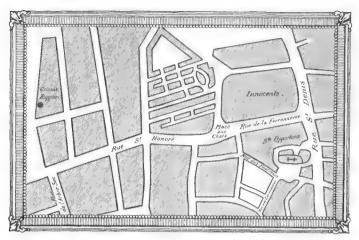
This GUYOT DE VILLENEUVE had opened an important fur house under the Directory, and, struck by the lively intelligence of Victor, his cousin's sixth son, offered to



Prince Murat, in Court dress.

take the boy into his business and look after his future. The offer was accepted, and young Victor left his father's farm and went to Paris. His stay in GUYOT DE VILLENEUVE'S business house was short, and in 1823 he obtained a position in the firm of POUCHARD, an important retail house in the Rue des Fourreurs.

Practically all the furriers, who formed a very close corporation, %



Where the rue des Fourreurs used to be

had their stores side by side in the street called "rue des Fourreurs". The shops had no windows and looked more like butchers' shops, with the furs displayed pretty much as meat is nowadays. Not many varieties of furs were sold: marten, fitch, ermine, beaver and squirrel practically exhausted the list.

Victor REVILLON showed during his apprenticeship so real an aptitude for business that the head of the firm of MOUTIER, falling ill, invited the young man to take the management of his business. During the two years he thus spent in Rouen (1828-1830), he fully displayed the business acumen and strength of will which foreshadowed the farsighted and enterprising man of affairs he was to become.

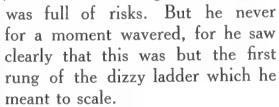
On his return to Paris, on the recommendation of GUYOT DE VILLENEUVE, Victor entered the influential fur house of Kerkoff in the Rue Saint-Honoré, and remained there till 1835.

By this time he knew everything connected with his trade; he had proved himself a capable manager. The one thing to do now was to develop all the plans he had been forming in his mind during these years. In 1835, again thanks to GUYOT DE VILLENEUVE, he was introduced

to JANCKE, a furrier, whose premises were situated at 23, Rue des Fossés-Montmartre (now Rue d'Aboukir) and who accepted him as his son-in-law and left him his business.

In M<sup>11e</sup> Jancke, Victor Revillon found a true help-meet. Charming in person, sweet in disposition and with a wide mental outlook, she was, for the thirty-eight years of their married life, the faithful helper and sagacious adviser of her husband.

No one who knew JANCKE'S son-in-law could for one minute doubt that Victor REVILLON would soon find his father-in-law's business too small for his vast plans. It caused no surprise therefore when, a few years after his marriage, he acquired the firm of GIVELET, which, as we have already seen, was one of the oldest and most important furriers in Paris, since it had been established 116 years when Victor REVILLON bought it in 1839. REVILLON was then only thirty-three, and to all seeming the enterprise



Long ago he had come to the conclusion that the bounds within which the fur trade was carried on were much too narrow, and that it was surely possible to enlarge them. The two main reasons for these limitations were: first, the use of very expensive furs which only the wealthy classes could afford to buy: and, second, the fact that the trade was limited to a few merchants, trading in the same quarter which had ceased to be the



Gent's furlined overcoat, under the reign of Charles X.



fashionable centre of the city. REVILLON'S aim was to develop the sale of furs by offering a less expensive class of goods to the middle-class purchaser, and to decentralise the trade.

The first point presented no serious difficulty. Although only a few varieties of furs — sable, beaver, ermine, squirrel, fitch — were sold, a good many others were known — e. g. skunk, Canadian marten, opossum, and grebe — all cheaper than the kinds dealt in. It was easy to secure these furs through import houses. But the outstanding problem was to persuade middle-class people to wear them, and thus to create a new body of customers. The bourgeoisie, which under Louis-Philippe, had become so important a part of Society, must become the main purchasers of furs. This aim could only be attained by drawing the attention of the women to these novelties and by displaying them in places frequented by the shopping sex. Drapers' stores, then a novelty in themselves, appeared the proper places in which to display the furs.

Some leading men of affairs had lately conceived the idea



A smart lady, in the time of Louis-Philippe.

creating vast stores where ladies could find everything they needed for personal wear: silk fabrics, lingerie, millinery, haberdashery and so on. Attractive catalogues, advertising bargains, were the bait to draw the customers. Once they had entered the stores, they could not resist the wares, displayed with so much taste and sold at such reasonable The success of prices.

the idea was immediate and complete.

The first stores opened in Paris were "Les Villes de France", "Le Coin de Rue", "Le Pauvre Diable", "Le Gagne-Petit", "Le Petit Saint-Thomas", "Le Bon Marché" and 'Le Louvre". Everybody now recognises the enormous importance of these stores.

It was quite evident to REVILLON that such places were in the best position to develop the fur business. But when the enterprising furrier explained his views to the managers of these stores and asked them to include in their catalogues his new styles of furs, he encountered all sorts of objections. It was folly, he was told, to try to compel women to wear different kinds of furs from those they had been used to for years. Besides, the fur trade was one of the most technical of the Paris trades and the apprenticeship was very long. How could REVILLON think that they and their employees could become fur merchants at first sight? It was preposterous!

But REVILLON was not disheartened. He remembered François I.'s epigram "Toujours femme varie", and his

faith in the ever-changing caprices of woman's mind gave him the guarantee of success. Articles presented in a fascinating manner were bound to catch her fancy. As to the technical side, he would attend to everything. "The furs will be delivered to you already classed", he explained to the objectors, "and I shall be responsible for their value. You will have no trouble whatever with regard to the fur department. Just advertise the goods in your catalogue, and keep some stock, however small, in your stores".

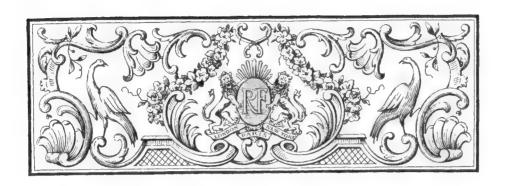
It was impossible to resist a man so confident of success and explicit in his ideas. He won his point, and an extraordinary success confirmed his predictions. Furs became fashionable in a new social class. REVILLON was not content to win Paris to his views. He meant to conquer the provinces as well, and to achieve this end he did not hesitate to undertake a rather ungrateful task. He looked up in the directory the names of all the people in the country whose business had something to do with feminine adornment, and every evening, with his wife's help, he wrote letters explaining to them his plans. No one knows how many of these letters remained unanswered, or how many of those who did answer were hostile to the proposition. But REVILLON needed only a few men bold enough to make a start — the rest would follow. So, to reinforce his propaganda, he engaged travellers, starting with two, whose mission was to enlighten France on the importance and influence of the House of REVILLON.

The pictures on pages 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 18 come from the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.





Head Office, 79, Rue de Rivoli, Paris



## REVILLON GOES TO RUE DE RIVOLI



HEN about 1855 the premises in the Rue Saint-Honoré were scheduled for demolition in order that the Oratoire Church might be enlarged, the annual turnover of the firm of REVILLON was already 400,000 francs. REVILLON had no objection to this compulsory removal,

for the premises of the firm of GIVELET, to which had been added in 1846 the business conducted by the firm of Lagave, had grown too small. It is worthy of note that in a law suit arising out of this expropriation, REVILLON employed M. Jules Grévy, later on President of the

French Republic, to defend his interests.

Moreover Baron Haussmann, the famous rebuilder of Paris under the Second Empire, had started important transformations in that city, and created those new and handsome boulevards which deprived of their fashionable reputation many of the older thoroughfares. For instance, the Rue de Rivoli, opened by the First Napoleon, from the Place de la Concorde to the Rue de Rohan, had been prolonged by Napoleon III. and absorbed the greater part of the traffic of the Rue Saint-Honoré. It seemed to the acute-minded furrier that it was a sound commercial notion to display

the goods of a luxury trade in a thoroughfare frequented by the arbiters of elegance. It was on this assumption that REVILLON moved his premises from the Rue Saint-Honoré to N° 81, Rue de Rivoli, which was to be the nucleus of the important block of buildings the REVILLON family gradually acquired betwen the Rue de Rivoli, Rue Baillet, Rue de la Monnaie and Rue de l'Arbre-Sec.



M. Théodore REVILLON.

In 1858, Victor REVILLON took into the business his two eldest sons, Théodore and Albert. But first he sent them to England and Germany where are found the most important fur markets. The stream of raw pelts already flowed towards London and, four times a year, important auction sales were held in that city.

For centuries Leipzig had been one of the largest markets for the sale of pelts, dressed and dyed, which had previously been bought in London, Nijni-Novgorod, Irbit, etc.



Albert REVILLON.

Three fairs used to take place, the most important being the Easter Fair which lasted a fortnight. To this fair came the pelt dealers of all Europe and America.

Until 1858 REVILLON, like other furriers, obtained his supplies from wholesale dealers or brokers. But now that he had become a wholesale merchant, selling to many retail houses, he resolved to reduce his costs by dispensing



Léon REVILLON.

with intermediaries. In 1859, in company with one of his sons, he visited Leipzig and London, and began his direct transactions by buying 100,000 raw muskrat skins.

REVILLON'S plans were now taking shape. He had opened up to the fur trade a new public, attracted by novelties in furs and by prices within the reach of people of moderate means. These customers were found

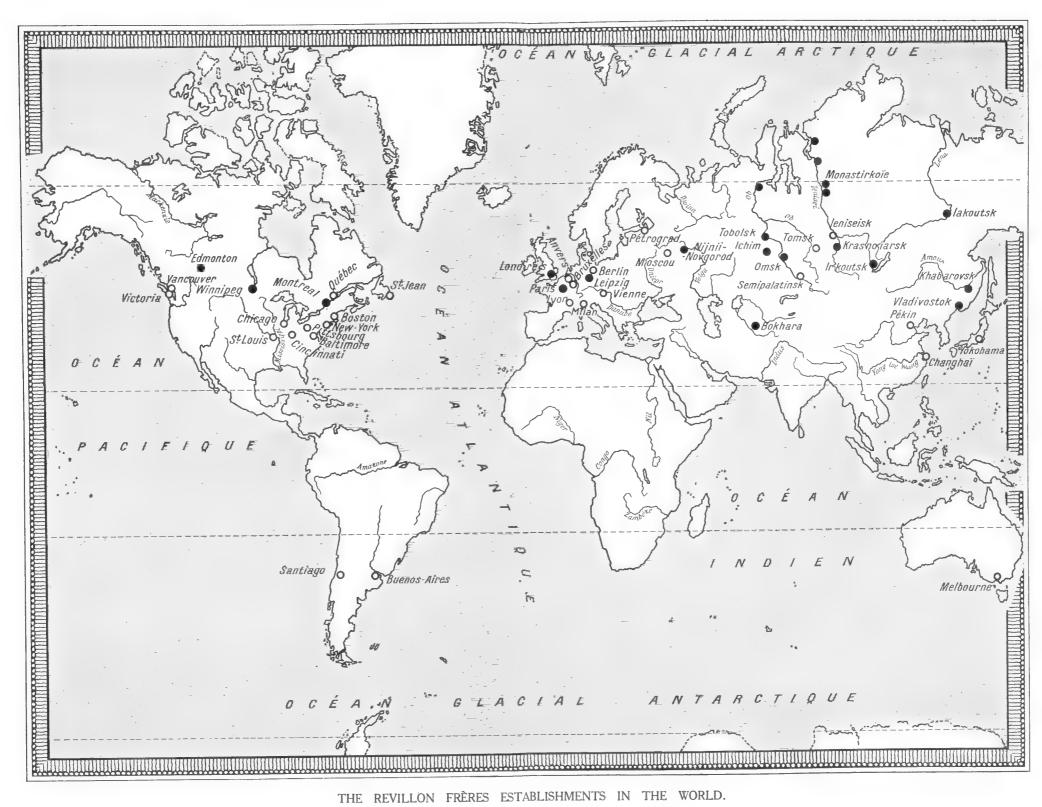
not only in Paris, but, thanks to the strong impulse given to the trade by energetic commercial travellers, throughout the provinces.

In 1865, after Victor REVILLON had tested the progress of his two eldest sons who had become experienced buyers as well as skilful salesmen, and proved them to be valuable assistants, the title of the firm was enlarged to REVILLON PÈRE & FILS. In the following year, the business of the House of POUCHARD, where Victor REVILLON had completed

his apprenticeship in 1827, was acquired by purchase. From that time onwards business grew and the turnover increased until the war-clouds of 1870 broke with the reverberation of the guns at Saarbrück, and a sudden stop was put to the trade in luxuries. The capitulation of Paris was closely followed by the conflagration of the Commune and Victor REVILLON sent his sons away to save them from enrol-



Anatole REVILLON



THE REVILLON FRÈRES ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE WORLD.

ment in the rebel forces. He remained alone in the storm-tossed city, with a few old employees, and with their help, succeeded in extinguishing a fire which broke out in the Rue de Rivoli premises.

After the war, to the surprise of the entire world, France resumed her commercial activity with marvellous quickness. The REVILLON business benefited largely by the outburst of confidence in the future of the country, and its stability and prosperity increased with the passing years.

Victor REVILLON'S dreams had proved to be no mere bubbles. They had been realised to an extent that far surpassed his anticipation. He might well be proud of his achievements, and feel confidence in the future of his handiwork, for his four sons (Léon and Anatole had in the meantime become associated with the business) all inherited his commercial acuteness, his unfailing energy and his spirit of enterprise. These sons, full of reverence for their parents, held each other in close affection, and their mutual confidence never failed.

Upon this scene of tranquil happiness and ordered energy burst a bolt from the blue. At Easter 1873, after a



Main entrance, rue de Rivoli

pleasant holiday spent with her family in the country, M<sup>me</sup> REVILLON died suddenly in her husband's arms. His grief was unbounded. His sons, hoping to distract his mind by business interests, took him to Leipzig. But their efforts were vain, and three months later he rejoined her who had been his constant companion for thirty-eight years. At the



RETAIL DEPARTMENT, RUE DE RIVOLI THE EMPIRE SHOW-ROOM



Counting House of the Retail Dept. rue de Rivoli.

end of a long, honourable and laborious career he left to his sons a business, created by his own exertions, of great importance and sound prosperity, capable not only of maintenance but of

wise development under the careful direction of his sons and grandsons.

Though the pilot had dropped the helm, the ship was not allowed to drift: the four sons of REVILLON resolutely grasped the tiller. As they held each other in too much affection for any one member to covet the control of the others, the work was divided between them so that each became the head of a department, and the new title of

REVILLON FRÈRES was realised in the actual operations of the firm. Théodore, Albert and Léon each took one branch of the commercial side, while Anatole took charge of all the indoor arrangements, as we shall explain below.

This new system quickly proved its effectiveness. Through the impulse imparted by the REVILLON BROTHERS the fur trade



One of the showrooms, Retail Dept. rue de Rivoli

entered upon a fresh stage which was destined to be not the least prosperous in its history. A short time before the death of their father, these young men had thought out a plan for working the trade on thoroughly new lines, which, if accepted by the public, would entirely change the course of their business and widely develop and increase the affairs of the firm.

Up to this time, the models adopted for fur garments remained exactly on the lines of those fashionable a century before. Fashion had no influence upon the cut. As these garments did not wear out quickly, the furs descended from mother to daughter, and the trade was conducted on too narrow lines to satisfy the enterprising REVILLON BROTHERS. They asked themselves whether it would not be possible to work fur in the same way as cloth or silk fabrics, and whether the latest fashionable models could not be reproduced in this material.

When they first broached the idea to others, they met with the usual scepticism and opposition. But like true sons of Victor REVILLON, they held tenaciously to their idea, and had some fur garments made on the patterns then in favour. These were displayed at the races and other social events in the fashionable world. The new idea caught the fancy of the smart set, and in a short time REVILLON FRÈRES had opened a special department where they sold fur garments constructed on exactly the same lines as the latest novelties coming from the workrooms of the most renowned dressmakers.

In England, the new venture met with at least equal success: in fact the English public gave it so enthusiastic a reception that M. Léon REVILLON was moved to suggest the opening of a branch of the business in London. A warm welcome attended the realisation of this suggestion and the branch speedily attained considerable importance. This was the first step in the policy of expansion which



The Gents and Rug Dept. rue de Rivoli.

was to give the name of REVILLON a world-wide renown not only in Europe, but in Asia, and, most of all, in America.

The next leap was made in the following year when, owing to the increasing purchases at Leipzig, the REVILLONS decided to open premises in the famous "Bruhl" where the fur dealers of all nationalities forgathered during the Fair. This allowed M. Théodore or M. Albert REVILLON to warehouse there the furs they had bought from the dealers of every part of the world.

At about the same period the REVILLONS ventured to take up a new fur which, up to this time, had been sold only in England. This was the sealskin, which they now introduced to the French public and from which they

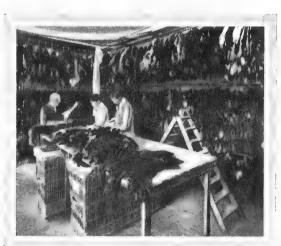
manufactured very attractive garments.

A brief history of the sealskin industry will not be out of place here, considering the important place this pelt has taken in the fur trade.

Everyone knows that, under the coarse hair which pro-

tects the seal from the cold of the northern waters, lies one of the softest downs imaginable, and that this down, properly handled, becomes the delightful fur we know as sealskin.

Fur-seals are found on the two borders of the Pacific Ocean, on the Pribilof Islands, west of Alaska, and along the Copper Islands, east of Kamchatka. While the Russian herd does not migrate far, the American seals in November journey southward as far as San-Francisco, and return along the coast of British Columbia. During this yearly migration along the northwest coast of the American Continent a veritable massacre of seals takes place, Canadians and Japanese from their steamers, Indians from their canoes, slaving the seals when they come to the surface to breathe, without regard to their age or sex. A contracting company obtained from the United States a monopoly of fur-seal hunting on the islands where these animals live. It methodically organised the killing which took place after the reproduction period was over, and the females and their young were carefully protected. This Company was itself under the control of the Government at Washington. and obliged to limit the slaughter to a specific number of



A corner of the skin Dept. rue de Rivoli.

seals, fixed by a Commission which met every year for the purpose.

In spite of these precautions the herd was doomed, by the massacres mentioned above, to utter destruction unless regulations could be framed, to put a stop to the indiscriminate



RETAIL DEPARTMENT, RUE DE RIVOLI THE LOUIS XV SHOW-ROOM.

slaughter during the period of migration. Negotiations for an international agreement were accordingly begun between Great Britain, Canada, Russia, Japan and the United States. A Tribunal of Arbitration was constituted in Paris in 1893; but the vexed question of pelagic fishing rights was not finally settled until 1916 when an international treaty was signed which should have the effect of preserving this valuable herd from annihilation.

Dealing in sealskins dates back about a hundred and thirty years. The Pribilof Archipelago was discovered in 1786, and the first seal pelts arrived in Europe in 1790. Nobody then dreamt of the value of this fur which was used only for the manufacture of bags, chests, travelling trunks and so on. Someone noticed that, as these articles wore out, the coarse hair came off, revealing beneath a soft and remarkably fine down. At the beginning of the 19th century, furriers experimented in various ways to obtain this down, first by clipping the coarse hair, and later by plucking it off entirely. The result was a beautiful golden and glossy down, with which they made caps, bonnets and muffs. It was not till 1842 that attempts were made to dye it, at first without much success; but later on, the fine colour with which we are familiar, was obtained. In 1847 the first sealskin coats were offered for sale, shapeless affairs like sacks with holes for the arms. However, in spite of these drawbacks, the new coats secured an immediate success, and from 1860 onwards they spread over all the European capitals.

When the REVILLONS applied their revolutionary methods to sealskin, and made jackets in fashionable shapes, it was soon found that this fur was very easily adapted to the various models, and actually gained in beauty by the process. Consequently REVILLON FRÈRES resolved to compete with London in the manufacture of sealskin garments. Here again they showed their audacity, for the sealskin



Main Building, rue de la Fédération.

trade involved the sinking of a large amount of capital, and leaving money idle for a long period. Sealskins which are collected in July along the Pacific coast, are put up for sale at the auctions in London in December and sold for cash in the raw state. The manufacturer who buys the pelts, cannot make garments of them before the May following and it is only when the frosts of approaching winter arrive, that he can dispose of the goods. The capital has thus been buried unproductively for over eighteen months.

The capital at REVILLON FRÈRES' disposal enabled them to undertake operations on these terms, but they had no space for factories where the various processes through which the skins must pass could be carried on. When a dressing and dyeing factory was added to the already crowded selling departments, store-rooms and general business offices in the Rue de Rivoli, it was found impos-

sible to work efficiently in such restricted circumstances. So the Espérance factory was opened in the Rue de la Butteaux-Cailles in the Gobelins district, with a ten horse power

engine, for handling sealskins only.

The sealskin garments put on the market by the REVILLON Brothers had a rapid success and, by 1880, Paris had become the undisputed centre for the manufacture of seal-coats. Orders came in such numbers that the factory in the Butteaux-Cailles was soon found too small, and larger premises with space for future expansion were required. In a then neglected district of Paris, behind the Champ de Mars, a site in the Rue de la Fédération was purchased on advantageous terms, and under the capable supervision of M. Anatole REVILLON, five buildings were erected in 1887 and succeeding years. Workrooms were equipped with up-to-date improvements; mechanical fur-cleaning drums, beating machines, hydraulic lifts, and electric lighting were installed, and the Rue de Rivoli premises were liberated from use for storage of raw and dressed skins and the dressing and dyeing processes.

The ordered progress of the firm was now again interrupted by the hand of Death. A heavy blow befell the devoted and united band of brothers in the decease of M. Albert REVILLON, at an early age and at the height of

his mental activity and commercial experience. He had been one of the most energetic leaders of the firm, which along the lines planned by him was growing larger every year. Exceptionally intelligent and thoroughly



gent and thoroughly A workroom where skins are dressed, rue de la Fédération



The reception room for raw skins, rue de la Fédération.

firm.

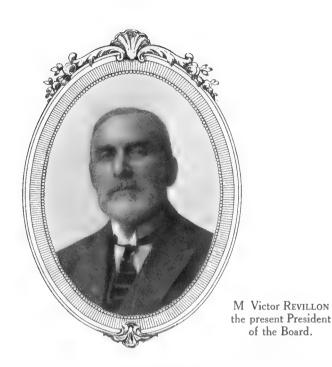
conversant with the world of business in general and the fur trade in particular. he was treated with deference by all. He had shown himself a capable captain of industry; his genial personality endeared him to all with whom he came in contact.

His death threw a dark shadow of grief over the whole

Some time after the decease of M. Albert REVILLON, the eldest son of M. Théodore REVILLON entered the business. and through the powerful impulse he imparted, the House attained an unchallenged position at the very head of the fur trade.

During the next ten years no striking changes occurred. The business expanded steadily. The firm's travellers visited the smallest towns in France, and in increasing numbers invaded the cities and towns of all Europe. Business expansion involved the necessity of elasticity in the headquarter premises. Shops in streets adjoining the Rue de Rivoli were rented, but the inconvenience of dispersal finally compelled the firm to add extra floors to the Rue de Rivoli buildings, and in 1880 the whole selling business was once more under the same roof. A similar need for enlargement of the Rue de la Fédération premises made itself felt; by good luck an adjoining site came into the market, and was acquired for the erection of buildings for the storage of furs.

Now the eyes of the enterprising REVILLON FRÈRES sought for new worlds to conquer, and their emissaries



were despatched across the Atlantic to find fresh fields of activity on the American Continent. A subsequent chapter is devoted to the tremendous efforts by which a new branch of the business was established in the United States, and to the organisation created in Canada for the collection of furs direct from the trappers.

The realisation of a programme on this vast scale meant the expenditure of large sums of money, and it became necessary to invite the co-operation of the investing public. In 1904, Revillon Frères was converted into a joint stock company with a capital of 30 million francs, under the control of a Board of Directors composed of M. Théodore Revillon, as President, and Messrs. Léon, Anatole, Victor, Paul and the younger Théodore Revillon. The secretary was and still is M. Choque, who with great competence superintends all the book-keeping and accounting of the Company. Immediately after registration, the new Company issued 6,000 bonds, and at a later date 4,000 bonds, which were at once taken up by the general public.

From that time, REVILLON FRÈRES changed their methods

of dealing. In the early years they had bought from dealers who made their purchases in the London and Leipzig markets. Subsequently they had themselves secured their supplies direct from these sources. Now they determined to buy direct from the trappers, and thus eliminate the middleman's profit and place themselves in a position in which any cornering of the market against them would be impossible. The development of this venture is narrated at length in the chapters dealing with the American and Russian branches.

The Paris House, as the headquarters of this continually increasing enterprise, had to expand steadily to meet the requirements of the situation. In 1901, after a successful experiment in New York, Anatole Revillon had decided to transform into a cold storage the premises in the Rue de la Fédération, which now extended to the Rue de Presles. M. Andrillon, the able engineer of the Company, collaborated with Anatole Revillon in producing the finest cold storage building in France. As soon as it was completed, the War-Office notified that it was to be turned over to them in case of war. Who then imagined that within little more than a dozen years the building would be requisitioned for such purposes?

At the same time the whole machinery was improved; powerful boilers and electric equipment of the latest type were added. Two years later, other buildings were purchased, and a new factory for beating purposes was erected with a frontage of sixty-five feet on the Rue de la Fédération.

On the other side of the ocean the plans of the young Victor REVILLON were gradually but surely developing, when the Board decided to complete the cycle of operations by exploring the Russian territories which provided large quantities of furs of many varieties and high value. Why not, they asked, organise in these countries a similar system to that which was working so well in Canada? So in 1905

plans were made, and in due course we shall see how they worked out.

Thus when the momentous year 1914 dawned, practically all the objectives of the firm had been attained, and everything was moving forward with smoothness and despatch. But with August came the fateful events that, for four years of concentrated tragedy, were to deluge Europe with blood and tears, and to lay a heavy hand upon all the ordinary activities of mankind.

Within a few days, more than one-third of the employees of the Paris House had been called up the to Army; the Moratorium had closed the banks, leaving the firm with little money in its coffers after important payments had been made on the eve of the outbreak of war. Numberless customers refused to accept delivery of goods ordered in better times. In a word, business came to a standstill in the space of a single day.

Yet there was no place for despondency. Salaries had to be paid, the few orders which might be received must be attended to; and faith in better days must be cherished as a defence against utter breakdown. The London and New York branches came to the aid of the parent firm, and the directors set themselves to organise, for the benefit of the members of the staff whose resources were scanty, a canteen where a daily hot meal was served at noon.

By mutual help and confidence the darkest days were tided over. But those who have seen the House in its present activity with customers, employees and travellers bustling feverishly about the well-lighted and heated salesrooms, staircases and corridors, can hardly imagine what the scene was like in these corridors and salesrooms during the cold, dark and mournful days of the winter of 1914. Those whose experience enables them to draw the comparison have only one feeling for the tenacity of those who bore the weight of responsibility during those

gloomy hours — and that is respectful admiration.

Death added yet another burden to these over-whelming troubles. In the early days of 1915 Léon REVILLON died suddenly. In an earlier passage, the important part played by him in the development of the firm, has been recounted. It was partly due to his initiative that furs were made up in fashionable shapes — the step which



The fur fashion of 1912.

greatly extended the fur trade and helped so much to increase the firm's business. It has also been explained how he was one of the promoters of the programme of foreign expansion and how he took an active part in the establishment of the London and New-York branches.



The fur fashion of 1912.

To all who knew him he was a model of tireless activity. His kindly disposition won the affection of the whole staff. To his last day he worked incessantly, and even in the darkest days, he never lost his faith in the future of the REVILLON organisation. His death was a heavy blow to the firm at a moment when the energies of all were needed.

During the same year a younger scion of the family



The fur fashion of 1912.

met a glorious death upon the field of honour. The younger Albert REVILLON had been for a few years only a member of the Board of Directors to which he brought an acute intelligence fortified by sound learning. Doctor of Laws and graduate of the Faculty of Political Science, he looked after all the financial, legal and indoor questions which were daily becoming more important.

His work was full of promise when a Prussian bullet cut short his career. He joined the Army with the rank of captain on the declaration of war, and in October 1915 he fell mortally wounded near Massiges in Champagne. A halo of glory was thus added to the name of REVILLON.

It now seemed that the good fortune the REVILLON family had so long enjoyed was destined to be heavily paid for. In January 1916 Anatole REVILLON followed Léon and the two Alberts to the grave. He had devoted his practical intelligence to all the matters connected with internal organisation, buildings, lands and engineering. His skill and experience in these matters had been an invaluable asset in



The fur fashion of 1912.



the development of the firm, and his decease inflicted another serious loss upon the Company.

As we have hinted, the great cold storage warehouse in the Rue de la Fédération was requisitioned by the military authorities at the beginning of the war when the German Armies were marching on Paris, and 40,000 frozen carcases of sheep were stored there.

But as the war dragged on its weary way, the preoccupation of the public with military affairs grew less intense. Fortunes had been made by those who dealt in war necessities, and they were looking for an outlet upon which to expend these new riches. In 1917 business gradually revived and grew in prosperity till the war was over. If REVILLON FRÈRES were to benefit by this revival, they were bound to have ready for the demand important stocks of furs in spite of the risks of exchange and the high prices of pelts. Hazardous as the step might be, the Company did not hesitate to buy large enough quantities of furs to

meet adequately the constantly increasing demand of the public.

With this revival of business the Company's premises were once again found too exiguous. Some time before the war, important extensions had been decided upon, which the outbreak of the struggle had postponed. In 1920 another cold storage building was erected, this time in the Rue de Presles, about the same size as the first one, with a broad and airy courtyard. In the same building were arranged a special room for valuation purposes, a beating room, and concrete basements which occupied the whole underground floor. From time to time the Company has acquired other plots of ground, on which will be erected new warehouses as necessity arises. Thus it now possesses the whole block situated between the Rue de la Fédération and the adjoining streets, an area of nearly one and a half acres.

In the course of 1920, the president and senior member of the Board of Directors, M. Théodore REVILLON, retired. His active participation in the business extended over a

period of 62 years, and he had taken part in all the largest developments of the firm. He was a famous expert in furs, well-known in the trade all over the world, and possessing remarkable business aptitudes. Always smiling and kindly, he has ever sought happiness in making others happy. There is nothing he loves more than to see cheerful faces around him. In spite of his advanced age, he still



Seals.

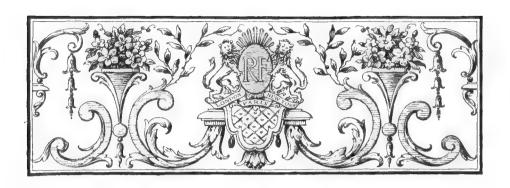
takes a close interest in the business. Surrounded by the revering affection of children, grandchildren and their helpmeets, he passes the declining years of a splendid career tranquil in the knowledge that his children are treading the same path, and will ever treasure the memory of his industry and sagacity.

With the departure of the eldest and only survivor of the four Revillon Brothers, who realised their father's dreams and magnificently developed them, a link with the foundation of the firm is snapped. But his children and their partners are true disciples, filled with the progressive ideas and loyalty to the firm which characterised those who have gone; and under the direction of the President who bears the name of his grandfather, they are unitedly developing the great task begun two centuries ago.





Revillon Frères London Ltd, 180, Regent Street, London.



## BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENTS IN LONDON



N 1869, Léon REVILLON, one of the promoters of the policy of foreign expansion, leased the first premises of the firm in London. These consisted of a small shop in Red Lion Court in the heart of the City. Mr. ARCHER was the manager and the staff con-

sisted of a few clerks, M. Léon Revillon paying the establishment a weekly visit. Prosperity followed the venture, and six years later made removal to larger premises incumbent. The new situation of the branch was in a building in Queen Victoria Street where floor after floor was absorbed as the business waxed strong and grew.

In 1886 Mr. ARCHER, who had managed the business since the establishment of the branch, retired and was succeeded by Mr. H. R. Cross who is still at the head of the great establishment which has been evolved, thanks largely to his active and loyal management. In those early days he personally visited the country customers. Mr. Paul HOPF was the book-keeping manager from 1876.

In London, as in Paris, fate showed the REVILLON enterprise that good and ill fortune are mingled in the lot of all. In 1889 when business was flourishing, an enormous conflagration, which is still fresh in the memories of many City men, broke out in a warehouse on the riverside and, spreading rapidly, utterly destroyed the REVILLON premises and several adjoining buildings. Crowds flocked to see the sight, for owing to the intense cold the water froze as it was sprayed from the firemen's hose, and hung in long stalactites from the ruined walls. This unhappy event gave the London staff an opportunity of showing the stuff of which they were made. One of the number, Mr. Gardner, undauntedly faced the flaming staircase three times in his efforts to save the books and documents.

The damage was very extensive and the greater portion of the large stock was burnt. No time was lost in getting to work again. With the kind help of Messrs. C. W. MARTIN & Sons, temporary premises were secured, and the affairs of Revillon Frères were carried on as best might be during



Fire at the REVILLON FRÈRES premises, Queen Victoria St. London.



The old firm REVILLON FRÈRES Queen Victoria St. London

the eighteen months required for rebuilding the Queen Victoria Street premises. But in spite of these drawbacks,

the business went steadily ahead.

The Franco-British Exhibition held in London at the White City in 1908 gave the firm of Revillon an opportunity of displaying its importance in the fur world. Nothing was neglected to impress and attract visitors. With the assistance of two French artists, Messrs. Fournery and Deshayes, a notable building was erected with its entrance guarded by a huge bronze lion. Inside, four remarkably vivid dioramas represented various stages of the fur trade — a Revillon steamer in the ice of Hudson Bay; a far northern fur-post; a scene in a Bokhara bazar; and, finally, a box at the Opera with elegant dames wrapped in the choicest furs produced by the Revillon work-people.

The Revillon pavilion was honoured by a visit of inspection from King Edward VII. who was accompanied by Queen Alexandra and the Prince and Princess of Wales. Their Majesties were keenly interested and asked for more information, which was furnished by M. and Mme Victor Revillon who received the Royal visitors. After the close of the Exhibition the dioramas were sent to New

York, and later to Copenhagen, where they were equally popular.

In the same year, the parent firm having been incorporated as a limited company, the London branch followed suit and assumed the title of REVILLON FRÈRES (London) Limited.

The drift of the luxury trades to the West End induced the REVILLONS to move in the same direction and a new building, 180, Regent Street, was rented. The retail business is carried on in the front part of the building looking on Regent Street and the wholesale department opens on Kingly Street. This new building is five times the size of the Queen Victoria Street premises.

With the development of the sales departments, the storage business has correspondingly increased, and the buildings used for that purpose were found too circumscribed. This situation induced REVILLON FRÈRES to provide for the London branch a cold storage on the same principle as those which were so successful in New York and Paris. On a site in Ganton Street, near Regent Street. this storage was built in 1913, and it is still considered the best and largest of the kind in the British Isles.

In this prosperous situation the business stood when in August 1914 the outbreak of war scattered the greater part of the staff over the wide fields of action in which the British forces operated. In spite of the unfavourable circumstances the London branch was able to carry timely help to the Paris House. In the sudden crisis caused by war conditions in France this financial aid was imperatively needed, and one of the London clerks was despatched with all haste to Paris, bearing sufficient money to pay the staff salaries.

In face of the ever-increasing shipping difficulties, enhanced by the success of the submarine war on merchant ships, the remaining London staff managed to obtain goods



REVILLON TRADING Co (London) Ltd., 61, Queen St. London.

from Paris, and showed their devotion to the firm by doing their best to overcome difficulties and keep the business afloat.

With the signing of the Armistice and the demobilisation of the forces, the staff was gradually reconstituted, and the London branch which had been at a standstill for four years, began to forge ahead once more. In 1918 another branch was opened for the buying and selling of raw skins, at 61, Queen Street under the title of REVILLON TRADING Co (LONDON) Ltd.

For centuries the London market has been the international centre for the collection and distribution of raw goods—leather, hides, pelts, feathers, etc. Since War had closed the Nijni and Leipzig markets, all the goods from the Far East, Australia and America that had gone to these centres, flowed naturally to London which has always been found convenient for dealers from all parts on account

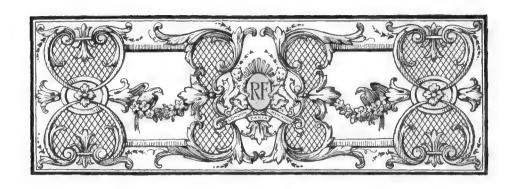
of its methods of free trade, perfect dock organisation and easy banking facilities. Revillon Frères grasped the situation at once, and perceived how they would be able to benefit by it through their world-wide organisation. This was their reason for creating the Revillon Trading Company which, it was intended, would collect furs from all the Revillon posts and sell them when the dealers came to the London Sales. The situation of the Queen Street premises is ideal, right in the heart of the City, close to all the large brokers and not far from the docks where every year over twenty million pounds' worth of furs are landed and disposed of. In this, as in all previous ventures, the firm gained a large measure of success.

The London organisation is entirely self-contained. The staff is a large one and animated by complete devotion to the name of REVILLON. Mr. H. R. CROSS, the managing director, has Messrs. Bonhomme and Packer as assistants, both of whom render most valuable services. Of the staff 63 employees have been with the firm over ten years, and 30 for over 35 years. Amongst the latter particular mention must be made of Messrs. Gardner and Poulton, the seniors of the London staff, who have each spent 44 years in the London branch.





Revillon Frères New York The Retail House 670, Fifth Avenue.



## ON THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT

THE STORY OF NEW YORK



N the course of 1878 an American, P. A. ROCKWELL of the Tradewell Fur Co., of Albany, called on Messrs. REVILLON in Paris, with a proposition that he should become their New York representative. His offer was accepted and Mr. ROCKWELL was appointed sole

agent for the firm in the United States. A stock of samples, dressed and dyed pelts and manufactured garments, was supplied to him, and immediately won the favour of Transatlantic customers who had not before seen furs dyed and worked in a similar way. As to the manufactured goods, the fact that they reproduced Paris fashions was sufficient to recommend them to the American public. Among the samples of pelts was a sealskin worked in the new Revillon fashion, and this secured an immediate success.

The outlook for big business was very promising. In fact orders poured in at such a rate that Mr. ROCKWELL'S organisation was not adequate to cope with them, and Messrs. REVILLON despatched to New-York one of their

Paris managers, M. P. A. MAJOT, who, having been brought up in the United States, was familiar with business methods on that side of the Atlantic. His mission was to study and report on the situation on the spot. On receipt of his report, the firm decided that the American business of Revillon Frères should henceforth be under the direct supervision of the Paris House. M. A. Javey, who had already proved his usefulness in Paris, was sent to assist M. MAJOT, and a sales office was opened at 731, Broadway.

At the outset these men met with all sorts of difficulties for they had to accustom themselves to methods of doing business very different from French ways. But through their tireless efforts the situation soon cleared, and in 1892 three floors of the Broadway building were already occupied by the offices of REVILLON FRÈRES.

In the following year, M. Victor REVILLON junior, went to New York for the first time. During his stay of several months, he made frequent journeys into Canada, and returned to Paris, convinced that the firm had a great future on the American Continent. His views were laid before his father and uncles, and his request to be placed in charge of all the American business was granted. He went back to the United States and Canada with ambitious plans which in due course were realised.

In the meantime Messrs. MAJOT and JAVEY had secured an energetic staff, by whose efforts a taste for REVILLON'S fur models was cultivated among the American smart set. The old premises became too small and in 1895 a building was specially erected for REVILLON FRÈRES in West Twenty-Eighth Street which was becoming the fashionable quarter of New York. The size of these new premises permitted the further development of the business. Orders came in from a new class of customers, the big dry goods stores,

dressmakers and tailors; and, in addition, many private customers began to frequent the House.

The story of Paris and London was repeated in the American Metropolis. The development of the sales departments involved the development of storage services. This matter was more vital to New York on account of the severe heat waves of summer which made the preservation of furs and winter clothes in ordinary conditions almost impossible. Messrs. Revillon resolved to apply to the storing of furs the methods used for the preservation of meat. The difficulty was that the cold storage rooms, were always wet, and damp would be ruinous to some furs and all fine cloths. At any cost the cold rooms must be made perfectly dry.

M. JAVEY, after many trials, succeeded in producing the required conditions, and patented his process. This process consists of the production of cold air in special rooms in the basement of a building. This air, after filtering through various chemical agents, becomes absolutely dry and is carried by means of powerful ventilators into the rooms where furs are stored. The first cold storage was built near the sales department, at 218-220, East 28th Street. Its success was immediate and soon after, Paris, and at a later date, London, were supplied with a similar installation.

Once more the premises in 28th Street became too small. New-York being built on the narrow Manhattan Island, Messrs. Revillon rightly surmised that the tendency of the City would be to develop north-westwards. They therefore decided to take premises on West 34th and 35th Streets, close to the Waldorf Hotel which had just been erected. Soon after they moved there, this street became an important centre for fashionable shops.

While the sales department made steady progress through the large number of travellers employed all over the States, Messrs. Revillon carefully watched the expansion of their buying organisation, which was beginning to take shape. To achieve their object of direct dealing with the ultimate sources, they kept in constant touch with all farmers and trappers in the areas where the finest skins were obtainable.

Following the same line of thought, they opened a buying office at Chicago, where, under Mr. O'TOOLE'S supervision, all the skins purchased in the Western sections were warehoused. In West 28th Street, New York, a large office was fitted up for the sale of raw skins, and here all the collections coming from Eastern areas were received, sorted and valued. From that building also were despatched all goods shipped to the European houses. Messrs. O'TOOLE and ARPIN were the heads of this buying organisation, known in the States under the name of "shipping".

When the Great War turned Europe upside down, Messrs. REVILLON, considering that for some time the centre of their business lay in their American organisation, intensified their efforts to the utmost.

In 1915 they transferred their retail business to the fashionable Fifth Avenue in a fine building at No. 670, close to Central Park, premises which a wealthy American had had copied from one of the Chateaux on the Loire. M. Victor Revillon unearthed some artists who decorated the interior in pure Renaissance style. The resultant effect, remarkably well executed, soon became one of the chief attractions of upper Fifth Avenue. In these beautiful surroundings are sold only the finest garments in fur and cloth, made according to the latest models of the Paris couturiers.

On account of the ever-growing demand for European goods, the fur trade expanded rapidly from 1915 onwards, and a large number of new firms were established in the



THE LARGE SHOW-ROOM
RETAIL HOUSE
5TH AVENUE, NEW YORK.



Interior of the Retail House of REVILLON FRÈRES, Fifth Av., New York

States. This created a very favourable situation for the REVILLONS' business which found a ready market for the skins collected at their posts. In fact from that time the raw fur business has increased every year.

After the death of M. MAJOT and the return of M. JAVEY to France at the end of over twenty years' strenuous service, after a short passage of M. Theodore REVILLON Jr., the New York branch was left for several years in the hands of American managers. But in 1916 M. Jean REVILLON, who, up to this time, had concentrated his efforts chiefly on the Edmonton branch in Canada, took in hand the direction of all the American branches. In order to



A sketch of the new REVILLON FRÈRES building, in New York (in the process of construction).

reinforce his authority and in recognition of his past services, the Board of Directors gave him the title of Vice-President.

Capt. Thierry Mallet, who had done valuable work in the creation and management of the Northern posts, was, on his return from the war, associated with M. Jean Revillon, together with M. Arpin who had been one of M. Victor Revillon's first assistants in the creation of the American system.

The American branch of REVILLON FRÈRES has become one of the most important businesses on the North American Continent, and at the time of writing, all the raw furs, storage services and so on, are being housed in a new building which the Company has had erected in 30th Street,

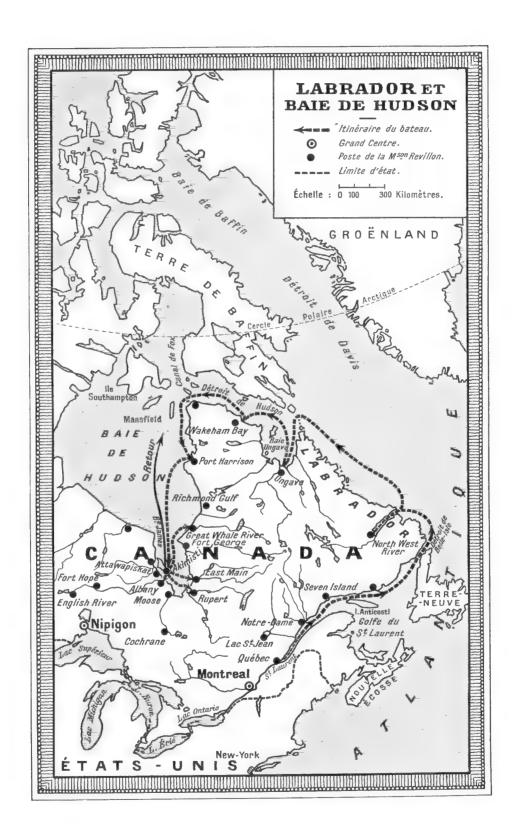
Eighth Avenue. The surface of this building covers 8,300 square feet, and it contains twelve storeys, four of which are equipped for cold storage purposes.

If one takes into consideration the large population of the United States and Canada, amounting to about 125 millions, it will not be thought extravagant on the part of the Revillon Frères Company to foresee further developments of their business in that great land, in which some members of the family make frequent sojourns in order to supervise on the spot this enormous commercial organisation.

Everywhere the name of REVILLON is predominant in the fur trade, and the fairness of their business methods is fully appreciated. Such is the reward of an enterprising spirit, steady application and untiring energy.



The present state of the new building.





## FUR-COLLECTING HAZARDS IN CANADA



N the preceding chapter we have seen how Victor REVILLON took advantage of his first trip to America to investigate the possibilities of collecting furs in Canada. He had enlisted the co-operation of a few young men, among them Messrs. d'AIGNEAUX and ARPIN.

who proved to be most valuable assistants to him and to the firm.

A project of this kind in Canada meant competition with a powerful company which had been founded in 1669 under a charter granted by Charles II. and had amalgamated in 1821 with the North-West Company. That Company was equipped with an important fleet, and possessed over 150 posts spread all over its hunting grounds, which were divided into 33 districts. Victor Revillon came to the conclusion that the Revillon firm could be organised on the same basis, and on his return to France in 1901, he set himself to convince his father and uncles of the practicability of his scheme.

He emphasised the fact that by the establishment of a whole chain of posts and outposts all over the North, and especially at the mouths of rivers, they could not



A white Bear killed in the ice of the Strait of Hudson.

only obtain furs from direct sources, but also secure the finest specimens which would be sold throughout the whole world under the name of REVILLON FRÈRES. He contended that it would be possible to impress upon the minds of hunters and local buyers that it was worth their while to offer to REVILLON the best skins. since the prestige of the firm could always procure purchasers of the best through its worldwide connection with wealthy Americans, Parisians and Londoners. If the best workmanship,

which meant perfection in production, and the most capable administration in all the departments of the firm were added, the name of REVILLON would soon be placed at the top of the tree in the world's fur-trade.

The attractive character of the prospects induced the heads of the firm to make a first trial by establishing posts along the coast north of the St. Lawrence. Posts were accordingly established in succession at the Pointe Bleue, Bersimis, Rivière aux Outardes, Sept Isles, Piastre Bay, and subsequently on the Labrador coast, at North-West River, where the trawler *Mary* conveyed all the equipment. In spite of the difficulties attending this enterprise, the results were sufficiently satisfactory to persuade Messrs. Revillon to go forward and establish other posts on the Hudson Bay.

Two methods of executing this programme offered themselves. The work might be carried out slowly and progressively, the safer plan, as experience would preserve each successive step from the difficulties presented in the earlier stages. But its adoption involved long delay, and



One of the REVILLON steamers in the Strait of Hudson.

its moral effect would be small. The other way was to establish simultaneously a great many posts, which was much more hazardous, but which would create a much greater impression upon the minds of the Indian hunters and also upon the trade rivals. In the event the latter course was adopted.

The first step was the purchase of a stoutly built Norwegian vessel, the *Stord*. She loaded at Quebec all the equipment and trading goods and the material for constructing portable dwellings, and embarked the staff who were to establish the posts, and the workmen who would build the houses. The expedition was under the charge of M. d'AIGNEAUX who had already carried out successfully the establishment of the earlier posts.

Through the lack of accurate charts and by reason of frequent fogs and icebergs the navigation of Hudson Bay waters is attended with many risks. So Messrs. Revillon thought it advisable to send agents by way of the Albany River, with instructions to engage Eskimo pilots in Southern James Bay for the purpose of guiding the *Stord* through

the dangerous passages of Hudson Bay. All eventualities having thus been provided for, the *Stord* sailed from Quebec early in July. A few days later, news arrived that she had run aground at the Pointe des Monts in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

The situation was serious. Only two and a half months were left before the ice would set and close the Hudson Straits. Was there enough time to charter another boat, bring her to Quebec, load her, and take her to James Bay and back? This meant running it very fine, but it would save a whole year. Messrs. REVILLON decided to take the risk.

The steamer *Eldorado* was immediately chartered in Liverpool, and sailed for Quebec under the command of Captain William Berry. When Pointe des Monts was reached, the goods were transferred from the *Stord*, and the *Eldorado* went on to Quebec to complete her cargo, arriving on August 7th. Meanwhile steps had been taken to advise the Eskimo pilots that the boat they were waiting



Buildings which constitute the post of Ungava.



The schooner "DOROTHY-SNOW", of the REVILLON FRÈRES fleet.

for would be a month late. Unfortunately the Eskimos never received the notification and after waiting some time, went away.

The Eldorado left Quebec on August 15th in fine weather, but two days later, heavy mists descended and delayed progress. Just after the Newfoundland coast had been left, a violent tempest blew up. Out of the thick fog huge icebergs loomed ahead. It was impossible to work out the day's reckoning, and the boat went slowly ahead, groping its way, guided only by continuous soundings. The captain believed he was in the Hudson Straits, but was by no means certain. From time to time the weather cleared sufficiently to prevent the vessel from running on rocky islands. On August 28th the soundings showed shoal water and the ship was anchored. Daybreak revealed an island with sheer cliffs only a few hundred yards ahead. On the port side a huge rock just showed above the surface; on the starboard the waves were breaking white over reefs.

The next day the ship was stopped barely two hundred yards from a long rocky island towards which she had been carried by a strong current. The charts were incorrect and unreliable. Even when the weather cleared, it was impossible to work out the day's reckoning on account of the mirage giving a false horizon. The depths varied from 20 to 5 fathoms, and the Captain found his work cut out to keep his ship afloat. In the early morning of the 30th, her doom seemed imminent. Suddenly the keel scraped on a reef. The ship was brought up dead. The captain gave the order to reverse engines; the *Eldorado* did not stir. The order to go ahead was given; with harsh scraping sounds the boat slid off the reef, and was once again in deep water.

At last the first stopping place, Fort George, hove in sight. But numerous reefs seemed to forbid a landing. To find a channel the captain ordered out the launch to take soundings. By ill-luck the launch was lowered too quickly, the motor was flooded and rendered useless. There was nothing for it but to work a way through the reefs by sight. Slowly the boat went forward when suddenly a series of bumps shook her from keel to truck. she was aground on a reef, and this time at full tide with her waterline three feet above the surface. The situation was practically hopeless. The first step was to lighten the steamer. The materials necessary for the construction of the Fort George post were unloaded. But all efforts were fruitless; the ship could not be floated. The sky plainly indicated the approach of foul weather, and it was absolutely necessary to abandon the ship. Soon after, the Eldorado lay over on her starboard side, utterly disabled, her hold leaking. Bad luck which had dogged the enterprise from first to last, had triumphed. The shipwrecked crew and passengers were cast on a barren shore far from help. But they lost no time in repining and all the members of the expedition pluckily set themselves to find a way out of their misfortunes.



The Montreal House.

Two alternatives confronted them: to stop where they were until the following year, living on the few cases of food that had been saved, until help came; or to try to reach the railway by the Moose River and other waterways. The first plan was only practicable with local help, which was refused. The second was risky, for rapids must be traversed, and at an early date frost might be expected and would bring their project to a hopeless end. But it was the only course open. Four men were left behind to look after the wreck and material, under the charge of an energetic Frenchman, Herodier, who had only obtained his discharge from a Cuirassier regiment two months earlier.

These men fared as well as the barren land allowed, and out of the wreckage of the *Eldorado* constructed a rudimentary post which later became the Fort George Station.

The rest of the expedition which with the Eldorado's crew numbered sixty, set out in the steamer's boats and two scows which were lent by Mgr. Newman. The REVILLON family has always cherished deep gratitude to Mgr. Newman for this act of humanity. With the help of Eskimo and Indian guides, the wayfarers traversed nearly nine hundred and fifty miles along the coast, up the Moose and Abitibi rivers, until the railway was reached.

On September 7th the little troop set out; but heavy snow storms delayed them and they were compelled to shelter. Eight days later, they had only got as far as Charlton where they hoped to find one of the Hudson Bay Company's steamers. But it had left the day before! Fate, however, in spite of appearances, actually favoured them, for the steamer was lost, four days out of Charlton.

The expedition at last arrived at the mouth of the Moose River where two men were left with the necessary outfit to constitute the nucleus of a post, and to show natives and trade rivals that REVILLON FRÈRES had set foot on land. So in spite of accumulated reverses the expedition was not

altogether useless. The rest of the party proceeded up the river. Rain fell in torrents and the weather grew so cold that they began to fear their way would be barred by a snowfall. Almost barefoot the men tramped through the forest and along the river bank. British sailors, firemen and engineers from the *Eldorado*, carpenters from Newfoundland, Canadian trappers and French agents — all alike bore the hardships with undaunted courage and persistence. Food became scarce, but, luckily, some Indians, encountered on the journey, supplied lard and sugar and a little flour.

Finally in a desperate plight they reached an inhabited region on October 20th. Completing the journey by steamboat and railway, they arrived in Montreal 68 days after the *Eldorado* had left Quebec, and 54 days after the shipwreck.

While these untoward events had been happening, the Stord was floated in the second fortnight of August, and left the Pointe des Monts. It was decided to send her to Ungava to establish a post there before the ice set. sailed under Captain Kearney's command with M. DRAU-LETTE to supervise the expedition and to create and manage the post. Along the Labrador coast, heavy seas and gales considerably delayed the ship. They groped their way to the entrance of Ungava Bay, and, having cast anchor, the captain, with half the crew, went ashore to reconnoitre the channel. The weather was then calm and fine, but during the night the barometer sank rapidly and a terrific storm blew up from the north-west. A tremendous sea got up and by-and-by the anchor dragged and the ship began to drift shoreward. The situation was serious in the extreme. Everyone on board—agents, cook, steward and ship's boys, lent a hand, the anchor was raised, steam was got up, and the ship's head brought round to face the storm. Slowly the stout vessel fought her way out



The S. S. "VIOLET" at Moose

from the hungry reefs, and by the evening a change in the weather brought calm and safety, and the captain was able to return aboard after an eventful day.

On the following day, the *Stord* was guided by an Eskimo pilot up the River Korsook to a point a little higher than the Hudson Bay Company's post. There the timber and equipment was landed and Messrs. Draulette and Thevenet constructed the huts and made their arrangements for wintering there.

The wreck of the *Eldorado* which had inflicted heavy losses upon the Revillon firm made it necessary to get the best use out of the existing posts. M. Victor Revillon returned to Paris, and the whole situation having been discussed by the directors, and the financial position of the company investigated, it was resolved to pool all resources and pursue the programme whatever the cost might be. During the winter, preparations were pushed on for an advance in the following year. Food and equipment were purchased, portable houses ordered and the timber procured for the erection of a large warehouse and docks at a central post on Strutton Island, to facilitate the

rapid unloading of goods. At the same time, six sailing barges were bought for communication with the various posts on Hudson Bay. The full organisation took three years to complete. During this period a small steamer, the *Violet*, of 150 tons burden, was bought in England. She crossed the Atlantic in the following spring, took on board a crew in Newfoundland, and proceeded to Moose on Hudson Bay. This vessel was intended for long voyages in the Bay and for carrying equipment between the central warehouses and the farthest northern posts.

But long before they were fully equipped, these posts had begun to work, and as early as the first season, they had sent important lots of skins to the headquarters of the new undertaking, Revillon Frères Trading Co, Mc Gill Street, Montreal. In spite of the complexity of trading, the collections very soon became regular — a remarkable feat when the immensity of the task is considered.

Fur-trading is a complicated business which comprises several stages. First, during the summer, the outfit is examined and brought up to standard. In autumn, goods are bought, packed in specially strengthened cases, and carefully weighed. The cases are transported during the winter, so that the task of procuring and forwarding the supplies for the posts is going on almost continuously throughout the year. Each post, which is distant from 100 to 200 miles from its neighbour, is responsible for the forwarding of goods to the next post outwards.

As early as October, the agents at the posts begin to make advances to the natives. These leave for their hunting grounds about November 15. Every native has his own ground, chosen by mutual agreement between the whole tribe and the chief. On his land the native lives in a tent or sometimes builds himself a log hut.

Practically all fur-bearing animals are trapped. A few, however, like the lynx, are snared. Traps are set at inter-



The signal mast of the posts with French, British and private REVILLON FRÈRES'flags.

vals on the edge of trails which the hunters have made for themselves. Each series of traps is visited every eight or ten days, for it is necessary that time should be allowed for foot-marks and snow-shoe impressions to be fully covered by snow, and the scent of the hunter dispersed by the wind between the visits, otherwise the suspicious creatures would never be caught. As a rule, the trappers work from November 15 to December 20. and return to the post for Xmas, bringing with them the skins caught between these dates, which

are called the winter collection. The post agent values the skins and supplies the Indians with more commodities. Even if the hunter's account is not balanced by the skins he has brought in, advances must be made to him to allow of his return to his hunting grounds by the end of January for the spring collection. Women and children never go far from the camps, and confine their attention chiefly to trapping weasels. It is a common sight to see a young Indian boy of six or seven, boldly entering the post to exchange the two or three ermines he has caught, for sweets and other delicacies. As a rule, no trapping is done between Xmas and the end of January, as the severity of the cold keeps the animals underground.

It should also be remarked that the native, while trapping for furs, cannot hunt for food as well. Rations must therefore be supplied. But at certain times, when the demand for furs has slackened, the post agents are requested to economise their food supplies, and the trappers are released from their task to hunt caribou for food.

At Xmas, Midnight Mass is celebrated at all stations where there are Catholic Missions. For instance, all the Indians of North-West Saskatchewan go to Isle à la Crosse. To attend this Mass, which is said by a French missionary in a simple wooden church, they will come on dog sleighs a distance of four or five days' march. The Cree tribe who live about the southern part of the river, and the Montagnais Indians who inhabit the north, attend the service, and the priest has to preach in two languages, sometimes in French as well, as he did at Xmas, 1906, when M. Jean Revillon was present. The ceremony can hardly be called solemn, for the dogs, waiting outside for their masters, howl to cheer themselves up, and the terrific din echoes through the wilderness in the clear and still air of these hyperborean nights.

On Xmas afternoon, after vespers, the Indians return home. It makes an imposing spectacle, the departure of all these sleighs with their teams of five or six dogs, the bells on their collars tinkling, and the drivers cracking



The S. S. "ADVENTURE" near the Strutton Islands.



The schoon r "ALBERT-REVILLON" leaving Wakeham Bay.

their whips as they speed at express rate over the lake of Isle à la Crosse.

At various times, REVILLON FRÈRES have had good cause to be grateful for the goodwill and friendship of various missions whose members have shown themselves kindly and helpful to this enterprise. We would particularly mention the names of Mgr. BREYNAT, Mgr. GROUARD, Fathers Lefebyre, Turquetil, Boisseau and Arnaud, whose relations with the REVILLON people have been most intimate. Father ARNAUD deserves special mention for the following reason among many others. At a time when an epidemic of diphtheria had killed off many Indian children. Father ARNAUD, oblate missionary, who in spite of his age and of forty years spent in Labrador, maintained his remarkable mental powers intact and kept himself thoroughly conversant with advances in medical science, requested the REVILLON agent to bring from Montreal some serum with directions for use. He himself injected the serum and stopped the epidemic.

Now that we have placed before the reader some details of the manner in which the trapping business is conducted, we will return to the history of the firm on the American Continent.

In 1908 the Board of Directors entrusted M. Thierry Mallet with the management of the whole section of Eastern Canadian posts. On arrival at the headquarters in Montreal, he resolved first to improve the organisation of the James Bay, Hudson Bay and Labrador posts. With this in view, he created a fleet of schooners able to carry supplies to the posts scattered all along the coast. He chartered at St. John, Newfoundland, the Adventure, a steamer of 2500 tons, which had been specially built for this purpose by R. Harvey and C°. It was the latest type of ice-breaker. A smaller steamer of 300 tons, bought in England, was brought to Newfoundland by French sailors.

In the Adventure and accompanied by the small steamer and a 200 ton schooner, M. MALLET made a seven weeks' trip to James Bay and found that amongst ice-floes, the new ship exactly fulfilled the Company's requirements both in strength and speed. On Strutton Island large warehouses were now erected as headquarters; and from this time on, year by year, the Adventure carried from Montreal to the posts all equipment, and took back the pelts collected at these posts. The small boats which wintered at Moose, voyaged during the summer between Strutton and the posts at Fort George, East Main, Rupert, Moose and Albany. At the same time, outposts were established inland, and other stations opened, northeastwards at Whale River and Port Harrison, north-westwards at Athawapiscat and Veenisk. In the extreme northeast, Ungava was strengthened and a new post was created in the Hudson Strait on Eskimo territory.

In August 1914 M. Thierry MALLET went to the front



The schooner "ALBERT-REVILLON"

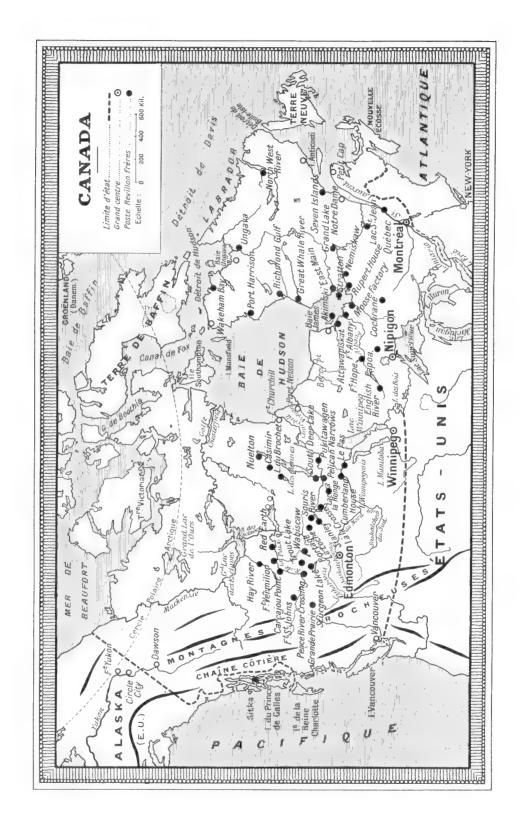
as a Lieutenant in a Chasseurs-à-pied regiment. He fought bravely and was twice wounded. His position as manager of the posts was given to Mr. S. H. COWARD who had previously been attached to the Edmonton branch as second manager of the Western posts.

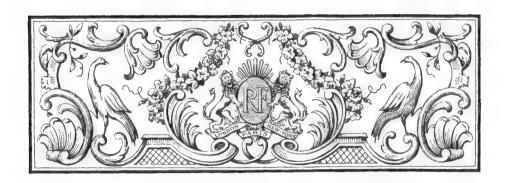
This was not the only difficulty created by the war. Many heads of posts had been recalled to France for military duty. Then the Adventure was requisitioned by the British Government, lent to Russia and eventually sunk by a floating mine off Archangel. The loss of this steamer severely handicapped the supplying of the Strutton depot and posts. At all costs a substitute had to be found, and since the Hudson Bay organisation could no longer be furnished with food and equipment by sea, recourse was had to the rivers which on account of numberless rapids were hardly navigable. After a careful study of the country, Mr. Coward found a passage between Pagwa and Albany almost practicable for scows. A few pounds of dynamite opened up the

worst rapids and the river passage became almost safe. Pagwa is on the railway. A large warehouse was at once put ut there and a scheme of transport adopted, which is still in use. Every year, when the river is full after the thaw, 40 to 50 scows, each of 15 tons burden, hauled by a small steam tug, go down the river, reaching Albany in eight days. This is now the headquarters, in place of the Strutton warehouse. This post distributes the equipment and goods among the posts in the country, and the various cargoes are carried to their destinations by the small schooners which always remain in the Bay.

As to the stations at Port Harrison, Wakeham Bay, Ungava and North-West River, they are supplied direct by three schooners, the largest and latest of which is the Albert-Revillon, named after Captain Albert Revillon, killed in Champagne 1915 — a three-masted schooner with an auxiliary Diesel engine of 200 h. p.







## THE NORTH-WEST CANADIAN POSTS



HEN M. Victor REVILLON had won over the directors to his views concerning the exploitation of the direct collection of furs and had been entrusted with the whole management of the enterprise, he assumed the control of the Eastern section, and entrusted the task

of creating the western posts to his cousin, M. Théodore REVILLON junior, who had just arrived in America. M. Théodore threw himself with such alacrity into the work that the business in his territory quickly developed and soon assumed an important character. He got into contact with local traders and in some instances, instead of creating posts, he secured the control of these traders' organisations from Peace River to Vermilion Lake.

The problem of supplying these posts with the necessary equipment was a much bigger task than in other sections. Neither sea route nor roads were available, the rivers were either not navigable or only barely so, and in many cases there were mountains to cross. For instance, in 1905, the goods went the first stage from Edmonton to Hudson's Hope, by sleigh as far as Athabasca. There, they were warehoused for the winter; and when the thaw came, they



Transportation of goods.

were carried in scows of five to ten tons, towed by Indians, as far as the Small Slave Lake rapids. At this point they were again warehoused until the road became practicable, when they were transported in oxcarts to Peace River.

This stage, about 150 miles in length, was the worst in the whole Far North. Each cart had to be drawn by two pairs of oxen, so that the first pair could drag the second pair and cart out of the pits in the road. Naturally, after such rough treatment, the goods reached Peace River in poor condition. There, the cases were repaired and loaded in scows which conveyed them the last stage of the journey to Hudson's Hope.



A REVILLON FRÈRES trapper in West Canada

This was 700 miles from the starting point, and about 30 days' march. But, owing to the lengthy stoppages in the various warehouses and the time lost in unloading and reloading, supplies that left Edmonton on January 1st reached



The return journey, on calm waters.

the posts only about September 1st. This state of things made heavy demands upon patience and persistence to overcome the various obstacles. But Théodore REVILLON was endowed with both qualities, and, thanks to his unwearied efforts, improvements were gradually effected.

In 1905 the Canadian Government had a road made by the N. W. Mounted Police across the Rocky Mountains, between Peace River and the Yukon; and the REVILLON



A scenery in West Canada.

Company was entrusted with the supply of all necessaries to the detachment who were sent there. The task was one of considerable difficulty, for the revictualling of their own posts was almost too heavy a burden. They were obliged to extend their ranch at Lake Saskatoon, which had been established to provide the firm's agents with fresh meat. On that ranch were kept large herds of cattle, which in autumn were sent to the various posts. There they were killed and the carcases kept frozen during the winter.

About 1907, thanks to wide publicity in the States and Europe, which represented the North West of Canada as the land of promise, settlers invaded the country in large numbers. Railroads were immediately constructed and transportation over all the Peace River district became much easier.

In the Prince Albert district, M. Delavault skilfully organised a chain of posts by securing the establishments of various traders, so that as early as 1904 the whole country from Athabasca River to Winipegosis was covered with a close network of Revillon posts. There again the question of transport was serious. Rivers were the only means of conveyance, which meant a heavy loss in goods damaged by water. The loss became so serious that, notwithstanding the enormous toil involved, the Revillon Company determined to construct roads on which the equipment could be conveyed in wheeled vehicles.

At first the horses suffered severely from the cold, which was as intense as forty degrees of frost, and from lack of proper stabling. This was soon remedied in various ways, and now a snow plough precedes the sleighs and keeps the road in perfect condition during the whole journey.

The latest road made in the far north-west of Saskat-



Souris River Post

chewan in 1921-1922, is 580 miles long. It was entirely constructed by REVILLON pioneers. At each stage, log stables and warehouses have been built, to allow a change of horses. This is most important, as horses cannot go on for more than a week at a time. They lose heart at the never-ending journey, so that it is necessary to send them back to their starting point after ten days as the utmost limit. This means of transport is still the most satisfactory in spite of its drawbacks, for it is thirty per cent cheaper than the river route.

The most important western posts of REVILLON FRÈRES are: 1. Those under the direct supervision of the Edmonton headquarters, viz. Sturgeon Lake, Prairie Lake, Fort St. John, Fort Vermilion, Hay River, Keg River, Wabiscond, Trout Lake.

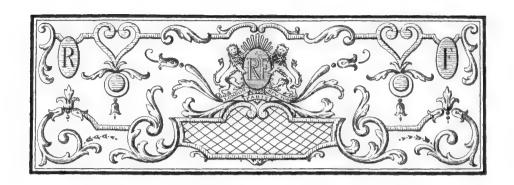
2. Those managed by the Prince Albert branch, viz, Isle à la Crosse, Buffalo River, Portage La Roche, Souris River, Clear Lake, Montreal Lake, Lac La Ronge, Stanley, Le Pas, Cumberland House, Pelican Narrows, Pukitawagan,

South Deer Lake, Lac du Brochet, Casimir, Nuelton. The organisation of these posts was completed under M. Jean REVILLON'S management. He succeeded his brother Théodore and then took over the management of the Edmonton Wholesale branch, which forms the subject of the next chapter.





REVILLON WHOLESALE EDMONTON (CANADA).



## THE EDMONTON DEPOT



HEN M. Théodore REVILLON Junior took in hand the organisation of the western posts, his first care was to establish a depot for food and trading goods as near as possible to the central posts. These goods could only be procured in the Eastern manufacturing

cities, Montreal and Toronto, which were too distant to be able to fulfil orders as the goods were required.

After close study of the question, M. Théodore fixed upon the town of Edmonton as the site of the central warehouse, and took steps to keep it fully supplied with all the commodities required by the posts. Edmonton was the nearest town to the posts in the North-West. It was just beginning to develop, for it had been founded only two years when the REVILLON Company went there in 1899, but signs were not wanting that it would shortly become a very important centre.

Edmonton originated in the famous rush to the Klondyke gold fields. Whilst the greater number of the hapless people who sought riches in that Eldorado, followed the Pacific route and were practically the only people who reached the Klondyke, thousands of others tried to arrive there by way of Prince Albert and Edmonton. But the

roads were impassable, so that only a few of the hardiest won their way to the goal.

These conditions contributed to the development of Edmonton, for the disappointed gold seekers settled down as colonists in the territory which, up to that time, had been frequented only by trappers and hunters. The resources of these settlers were still very scanty when the REVILLON warehouse was opened. It was then only a small wooden building, covering a few square feet, with a sign "Cash paid for Fur" on the door, and a fence of stakes to which the farmers hitched their horses when they came to REVIL-LON'S to secure the supplies which their farms could not At first it was difficult to supply both posts and M. Théodore REVILLON accurately gauged the farmers. possibilities of the situation and set to work at once to make the warehouse large enough to store a supply of necessities adequate to meet all demands. Large stocks were obtained and in 1905 a train of 26 trucks filled with goods for REVILLON FRÈRES left Montreal and traversed the greater part of Canada, bringing to Edmonton everything necessary to create the vast stores which M. Théodore had planned.

From that time onwards, the Edmonton branch was able to supply at reasonable prices everything needed not only by the small retailers of the country and the government agents, but also by large undertakings like the railway companies.

Increased business was followed by extension of the premises, and in 1912 in place of the log warehouse, a building as big as the Louvre or the Bon Marché in Paris was erected. Here every requirement can be met, from carts and harness to all kinds of eatables, hardware, china, glassware, silk fabrics, books, drugs and agricultural implements.

This business became the most important organisation



A whole train of 26 carloads, entirely filled with goods for REVILLON FRÈRES.

in the whole West of Canada. It continued to develop steadily under M. Jean REVILLON'S management, and with a capital of £ 300,000, has now a turnover of a million sterling.

At present the Edmonton Wholesale is under the management of Mr. J. E. Brown with Mr. Bottom as assistant. Thanks to his large experience of the dry goods business acquired in the States, and to his skilful adaptation of his knowledge to North-West Canadian requirements, M. Brown gave a new impulse to this enterprise which is gradually advancing, according to plan, towards the north-west and will soon reach across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific coast.

New warehouses have already had to be built to store the goods which will assist the colonisation of the Far North: new fields of action, far from the Edmonton base, are constantly being opened up, and intermediate branches have been established at Grand Prairie and Peace River.



NANOOK.



## NANOOK, AN ESKIMO HUNTER



SKIMOS and Indians have become to a certain degree fellow-workers with the REVILLON Company. They still live under primitive conditions in accordance with their inherited habits, and our readers will probably be interested in a short description of the life of an

Eskimo tribe in the Far North of Canada, along the coasts of Hudson Bay and in Baffin Land. An Eskimo

family lives in summer in a tent made of caribou hide. In the winter the Eskimo father, after selecting his hunting ground, takes his snow-knife and builds his "igloo". He cuts snow blocks which he places one upon another until he has made a dome-shaped hut, not unlike a bee-hive. These blocks gradually freeze and unite closely. A few hours after the igloo is built, its roof becomes



Eskimo just making a window to his igloo.

sufficiently strong to support the weight of several persons. Nothing but a wandering Polar bear can break it in. This actually happened in one case. Two elderly Eskimos, whose igloo was near the REVILLON post at Cape Dufferin, were awakened in the middle of the night by the



An Eskimo tent, made of caribou hides

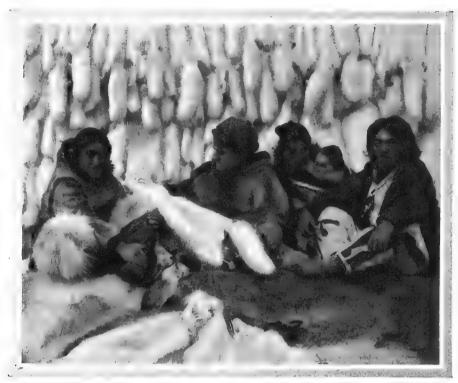
fall of a big block of their roof, and saw, a few feet from their faces, the head of a white bear. The old woman took the hook she used to trim the lamp and held the bear at bay while her husband crawled out, and reaching for his harpoon, killed the intruder.

The whole family lives in the igloo, and a close watch is kept on the walls, for the temperature must, on no account,



An Eskimo making a saucepan out of a stone.

rise above freezing point or the walls would collapse. Plainly, the central heating question is not an important matter in these lands. Neither is the furnishing problem, for, on account of their constant migrations from one hunting field to another, they carry only an absolutely indispensable outfit hunting and fishing implements, clothes and a few cooking utensils. Before the REVILLON posts were established.



The head of a REVILLON post examining furs brought by Eskimos.

these utensils were massive pots of hollowed stone or receptacles of walrus skin. Nowadays, they are supplied with strong, but light, pots and pans which they procure at the posts.

In winter, life in an igloo is brightened by the presence of one or two Malamute pups, which make excellent playmates for the Eskimo children. After its first winter, the Eskimo dog must live out of doors, for the fully grown animal is always famishing and would devour, not merely the food of the family, but their clothes of caribou hide and even their sealskin boots.

Around each REVILLON post a number of Eskimo families take up their abode, and their igloos are put up in the immediate vicinity. These natives are the boarders of the post, so to speak, hunt for it and receive in exchange everything they need.



An Eskimo family coming to the post Revillon Frères in their Omiak.

When the spring sun shines brightly and the igloo walls begin to get damp, the Eskimo family abandons the hut. The "omiak", or large skin canoe, is loaded with the family's belongings, and off they go salmon-fishing. Then follows the collecting of "mimeek", the eggs of wild sea-fowl, which abound in these regions, and the gathering of various berries which the Eskimos are very fond of, and which make a pleasant change to their winter diet.

They enjoy their short summer to the utmost, for winter soon returns, and the long Polar night enshrouds everything once more. The igloo is rebuilt and the natives say good-bye to the sun which appears only for a few minutes each day above the snowy horizon.

The Eskimo hunts bears and caribou on land, and seals and walrus in the sea. The latter, he attacks in his "kayak" or standing on a firm block of floating ice. A good hunter can hurl his harpoon a distance of a hundred and ten yards



An Eskimo mother with her child.

with sufficient force to kill a walrus weighing 2,000 lbs. He cannot hoist this enormous carcase aboard his frail boat, so he moors it as well as he can with his harpoon cord and summons help, which his relations and friends are only too ready to give, for walrus flesh, still warm from the kill, is a cherished delicacy. They cut up the creature without delay, and eat the meat raw without any bother about cooking. From the skin of the walrus, which makes a stout and heavy leather, the Eskimos fashion harness for their dogs, whips, pails and various utensils. The tusks are used as spear-heads and sledge-runners.

In winter, the seal is the chief prey of the Eskimo. This mammal must rise to the surface every twenty minutes to breath through holes which it keeps open for this purpose in the ice. The hunter waits patiently above this hole, his harpoon in readiness for the coming of the seal. He is often disappointed, for seals are cunning creatures

and have many breathing holes. Patience, however, is an Eskimo virtue, and he will wait hours, and even days, for his prey. If the cold is too bitter, he builds



Eskimo spearing a walrus from the bank.

Eskimos bringing ashore a white whale, which they have speared and drowned.

himself a shelter of ice-blocks without relaxing his watch. When, at last, the head of a seal appears above the surface of the hole, a quick thrust of the harpoon ends the long wait and there will be fresh seal meat for supper, oil for the igloo lamp, and leather for the supple and marvellously made boots which every native wears.

"Strange as it may appear" writes M. Victor REVILLON in his book on the seal, "seal pups cannot swim any more than babies. As soon as they are born, they start gambolling together on the sand. In the clear morning sun of the North they lie in pools, allowing the water to make them float, then try to paddle with their tails. When they feel strong enough, they abandon themselves to the moving waves, which gently carry them away and bring them back to the beach, cradled in the waters. But it takes them at least two weeks of effort to learn how to use their fins. Then the boldest seek out the deep water, but sometimes their audacity proves fatal and one sees them rolled over by a large wave, and sinking like a stone, their round heads and frightened eyes disappearing under water while their small back fins wriggle despairingly on the top of the waves".

Seal-hunting over, the salmon-fishing season early in the spring provides the Eskimo family with an abundance of food. The fisherman makes himself a new harpoon. In shape, it resembles a two-pronged fork: one prong is of ivory, the other of steel, securely lashed to the handle. A thong of seal leather, six or seven feet long, is used to haul back the spear when the prey has been transfixed. The Eskimo fisher uses no bait, but attracts the fish by means of two bits of ivory which he cleverly shakes in a crack in the ice. As the fish rises to this artificial bait, it is speared.

The Eskimo woman plays an important part in the management of the family. Besides the ordinary duties of wife and mother, she acts as hatter, furrier and shoemaker



Eskimo on the lookout for salmon on floating ice

for the whole family: she makes all their skin garments which she adorns tastefully. For instance, out of a blanket bought at the post she will make a summer frock with huge buttons constructed from metal spoons from which the handles have been cut. These buttons tinkle when the wearer stoops and sits, and the louder the tinkle the more fashionable is the frock reckoned in Eskimo circles. But the Eskimo woman's masterpiece is the family footwear. These boots are warm, pliant, waterproof, stoutly sewn with buttonhole stitch and very strong, for they undergo rough treatment. When the thaw comes, the boots become wet and stiff. They are put to dry completely outside the hut and then the woman softens them by chewing them until the leather again becomes supple.

Eskimo women could hardly be recommended as cooks in a civilised family. Before the REVILLON posts were



Eskimo girl from the Hudson Bay.

established, they did their cooking in stone pots or walrus skin utensils. Hot stones were thrown one by one into the stew to heat it, but the process was long and the result not exactly appetising. The culinary powers of the Eskimo woman have been extended since she has been able to procure enamelled pots and pans from the posts. But her limitations are many, and in a country where everyone is always hungry, any food, cooked or raw, is welcome: quantity rather than quality is the criterion.

The Eskimo mother makes no baby clothes. Her infant lives naked inside the big fur hood of its mother's coat till it can walk by itself. Eskimo children are very beautiful: their features, Mongolian in type, are perfectly regular. Their hands and feet are small and well shaped: in fact, Eskimo women have pretty hands all their life in spite of the hard conditions of their existence.



A Young Eskimo girl.

Eskimo mothers suckle their children two or three years, for the food of the adults is totally unsuitable for infants. This long nursing period is one of the reasons why Eskimo families are never large.

The parents are kind and affectionate to their children and never punish them harshly. The youngsters are loving and obedient and they pronounce with reverence the words "atata" (father) and "anana" (mother). Eskimo youngsters are not shy before strangers, like the Indian children who run away. They come smiling and confidently up to the stranger; having never experienced ill treatment, they cannot conceive of the existence of cruelty.

As soon as the little Eskimo can walk, he is provided with



Learning to become a hunter.



An Eskimo family travelling inland.

a suit exactly like his father's, from the capacious hood and caribou coat to the small waterproof boots of sealskin. In these comfortable and well ventilated clothes, he is able to play as he likes in the snow without risk of a chill.

His first toy is a tiny sledge. For six months of the year Eskimo children play in the snow as the children of warmer climes play in sand or mud. As early as possible, the Eskimo father begins to teach his little son to use bow and arrow. He moulds snow animals, bears or foxes, to serve as targets and when the arrow pierces one, father and child are full of joy.

The Eskimo mother, it should be observed, is an important member of the family council, and no serious decision is taken without consulting her views.

The earliest companion of the little Eskimo's games is a puppy who learns his trade very young. The child harnesses him to his little sledge and teaches him to draw light weights. At first the puppy vehemently objects, but soon grows accustomed to his fate, and by the time he is strong enough to take his place in the team, he knows his work well.

Dogs are indispensable to the Eskimo. He will readily exchange a good rifle or a parcel of valuable skins for a



The leader of a sledge.

dog he fancies, and the REVILLON schooners that sail between the posts on Hudson Bay, frequently carry on their decks canine passengers on their way to a new home.

A team dog is very fond of its work, and is always ready to start. The whole team bark and howl as they draw their heavy load, but come to a stop only when they cannot go any further. As a rule, Eskimo drivers are kind to their dogs, and only punish them severely in case of laziness or fighting. In a snow storm, the driver often precedes his team to make a trail so that the animals can more easily draw the sleigh. After a long day's journey the dog's face is covered with a mask of hard ice caused by its frozen breath.

Every team has a leader, a wise old dog, which pulls at the end of a long trace and keeps the rest of the team under rough discipline. In a rough and tumble between dogs, the leader intervenes and speedily separates the combatants with its sharp teeth. When the command to stop is given, the dog, dead tired, throws itself on the snow, and liberated from its harness, lies there till the signal is given to resume the journey.

An Eskimo dog will eat anything it can get hold of, even its harness, if its master has carelessly left it about. There-



Eskimo getting ready to spear a white whale, from his kayak.

fore boots and clothes are put to dry on the top of high poles, and the "kayak" itself placed upon a high pile of ice so that its leather cover is preserved from hungry teeth. The usual food of the dogs is seal meat or dried fish, and they are fed only once a day.

At the limit of the forest line, the dogs are harnessed in Indian file, generally four dogs to a sleigh. Further north, where there are no tracks, the dogs are fastened fanwise, an easier way to control, but causing frequent stoppages to disentangle the traces that are mixed up during the journey or by the constant fights between the dogs.

The sleigh must be very carefully loaded, for it is pretty sure to be upset several times a day. But Eskimo guides are very skilful packers, and it is seldom that the goods are damaged when the sleigh capsizes. If the sleigh collides with a boulder or an ice-block, the traces will sometimes break, and the dogs continue their gallop across the plain. To run after them would be useless: the wise driver lies



An Eskimo woman of Southern Baffin Land.

on the snow and imitates with his arms the movement of a seal. The dogs come back at a run to seize this prey, and are easily caught and harnessed again.

The Eskimo uses two types of boat — the "kayak" for travelling and hunting, and the "omiak", a large boat holding a dozen persons, for the spring migrations in which old people, women and children and household goods must be carried.

The "kayak" is a tiny canoe of remarkable build, but extremely frail and unstable. But the Eskimo handles it so cleverly that his canoe can compete in the matter of speed for several miles with a motor-boat. The framework of the canoe is made of anything the builder has been able to lay hands on. In many cases the drift-wood of which the keel is made, is patched with bones and ribs of animals. The sealskin that covers the frame is strongly laced on the keel, with a circular opening in the deck for the paddler to sit in. A skilful Eskimo will sometimes use a sail when travelling before the wind.

When hunting, the Eskimo fixes his harpoon in front of



The mail is leaving from the REVILLON FRÈRES post of Moose

him on the deck. Behind is a buoy attached to the harpoon by a long leather thong. When the hunter has thrown his



White Fox just trapped.

harpoon, the buoy follows it overboard, enabling him to locate his prey and pursue it. If the animal is not caught, at least the spear is recovered.

In Arctic regions only one industry the fur trade — exists. Years ago, Eskimos hunted only for food

and clothing but now they have a market for valuable skins, which enables them to obtain, in exchange for pelts, many necessary commodities, that make their life easier and safer—rifles and ammunition, tent poles, canvas for tents, steel needles, and thread, telescopes which help to locate distant game, and large snow-knives of steel, which last much longer than their old ivory knives.

The coming of the agents of REVILLON FRÈRES into the Far North has had this beneficent effect upon native life. It has banished the famines which used often to occur during exceptionally severe winters or through migrations of game or the loss of boats or dogs. When such misfortunes now happen, there is enough bacon, flour and beans at the post to enable the natives to tide over the evil days.

REVILLON posts consist of five or six wooden buildings, the material for which has to be brought from Montreal. These houses are built at some distance apart to avoid fire risks. Near the agent's dwelling is an alarm bell on the top of a tower. In case of fire, this bell sounds the alarm to summon the employees and Eskimos living in the neighbourhood.



Eskimo listening for the first time to a gramophone.

Eskimo trappers bring their furs to the post by either sleigh or kayak, or even in large packs carried on their backs. The furs are wrapped in bales, packed in a deerskin cover and securely fastened by means of caribou thongs. The skins are thoroughly cleaned and dried by the hunter and his wife, and in that state will keep for a long time. Eskimo hunters from a long distance, camp near the post for a considerable time, placidly selecting the goods they need, and making the most of this pleasant holiday. They kill time by playing various games and even organise boxing contests in the native manner, which involves fighting with the forearm, with no effort to parry blows. The man who can stand punishment the longest is the winner.

White men, accustomed to the Arctic regions, are not afraid of the long winters for they adopt many of the Eskimo methods of making the cold bearable. As soon

as the snow begins to fall, the trader has a wall of snow blocks built round the post, which becomes like an igloo, protected from wind. The entrance is under a snow tunnel made opposite the door. The schooner has left plenty of coal, oil, and food; moreover the fishing in the ice is good, and game generally abundant, provided the trader has the time for it. He spends his time organising his work and trying to make his post as prosperous and profitable as he can. He must know furs well, and buy judiciously. The welfare of his staff is also in his hands. The head of a post must be energetic, resourceful, and show a good example. The freedom of this life has always attracted men of strong character, and of those who have actually experienced it, very few return to civilisation for good. Every three years, the trader goes on furlough and returns to civilisation. He is then able to estimate whether the crude and austere life of the primitive race among whom he dwells, has not some advantages over existence in more conventional surroundings.

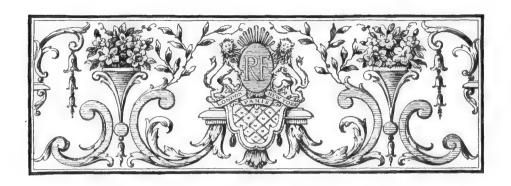
Some years ago, M. Thierry Mallet in conjunction with M. Jean Revillon arranged with an intrepid explorer to take a film of life in these regions. For nearly two years this cinematograph expedition lived in the Eskimo countries and at the end of that time brought back eleven miles and a quarter of films, forming the story of NANOOK THE ESKIMO, which has been exhibited all over the world with triumphant success<sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> This film was sold to Pathé Exchange, of New York, who diffused it al lover the world.





THE REVILLON FRÈRES BUILDING IN KRASNOYARSK (SIBERIA)



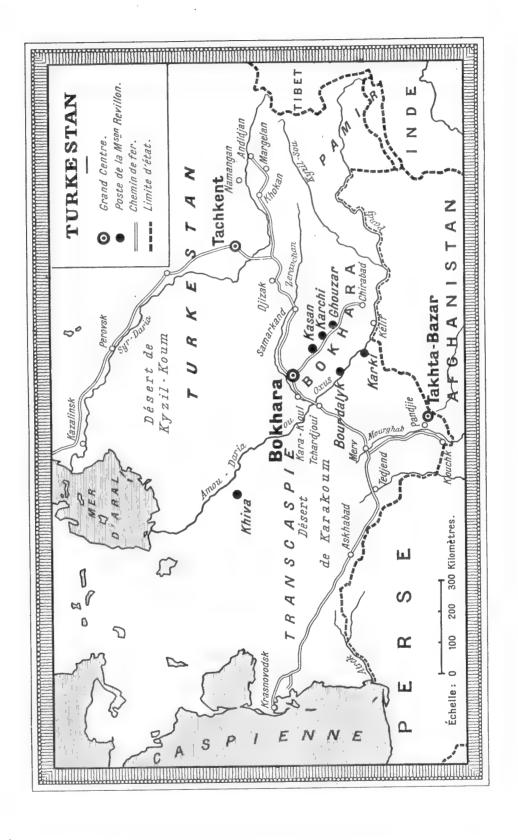
## REVILLON FRÈRES IN RUSSIA AND THE FAR EAST



HE extraordinary results of REVILLONS' fur-trading business in Canada naturally convinced them that their achievements on the American Continent could be repeated in all regions where furs were collected in large quantities.

Russia is, next to Canada, the country where the finest furs are found. Messrs. REVILLON investigated the best means of organising a system of trading in the Russian fur districts. However, it was not to Siberia, the land of the fox, the sable, the squirrel and the ermine, that they turned first, as one would have expected. The fur which attracted their attention was Persian lamb, a very valuable commodity, for which there is a large demand and which they were anxious to obtain from direct sources.

It is generally known that the fur called Persian lamb or Astrakhan is derived from a lamb of the Syrian variety, which is specially bred in Russian Turkestan. Full-grown sheep of that region are about the same size as our own breed. But their large tails are full of fat which supplies nourishment to the animals during times of scarcity. The lamb is killed for its fur between eight days and three weeks



old; after that the coat, which is beautifully curled when the animal is born, becomes straight-haired, like the fleece of the full-grown sheep. The Astrakhan sheep live on the steppes in herds which are often large. As a rule, the lambs are born in the Spring, rarely in the Autumn. But it sometimes happens that the extreme climate of Turkestan exercises an unhealthy influence even upon animals, and causes premature births. The lambs born out of season have a lovely fur, very close and "watered", which is sold in Europe under the name of Breitschwanz.

Russian Turkestan possesses a climate very hard for Europeans to endure. The temperature rises at certain periods of the year above 104 in the shade and sinks below 50 in the night. No roads exist in this land of immense plains. Worst of all, the inhabitants, composed of Tatars, Usbeks and Tadjiks, that is, descendants of Ghengis Khan and Tamerlane, are not at all friendly disposed to foreigners. Negotiations with them would inevitably be far more difficult than with peaceful Indians and happy-golucky Eskimos. Moreover, opposition might be expected from the dealers of Bokhara who, up to the present, had enjoyed an undisputed monopoly in the Persian lamb market, which the presence of foreigners was sure to menace.

But Messrs. Revillon had solved so many difficult problems that they were not afraid to deal with this new phase: in fact, they rather enjoyed overcoming formidable obstacles. So, early in the spring of 1905, an expedition was organised with Bokhara as its objective. The personnel of this party consisted of Messrs. Budelot, Léon Blot and d'Aigneaux; they left Paris in March, traversed Austria and Southern Europe, crossed the Caspian Sea, and reached Bokhara at the end of the month.

Bokhara, the holy city, with its thousand mosques and its massive clay walls, is the residence of the Emir and the



The Labi-Kaus in front of the great Mosque of Bokhara.

central market for Persian lambs. These were brought to the market called the "karakul bazaar", by rich breeders whose long caravans put on the market thousands of skins. Often too, on the desert tracks of the steppes, one met Sartes peasants, some on foot, tightly grasping in a cloth two or three precious fleeces; others riding on little donkeys, loaded with a wallet from which emerged the heads of three or four bleating lambs. As soon as they were sold, the unhappy animals were killed by the official butcher of the market. Thus, annually, over two million Persian lambskins were shipped from Bokhara.

Immediately on arrival, the members of the expedition experienced the anticipated opposition. Merchants were hostile and the Government ill-disposed. The latter even went so far as to resurrect an old ukase forbidding foreigners to enter Turkestan without special permission.

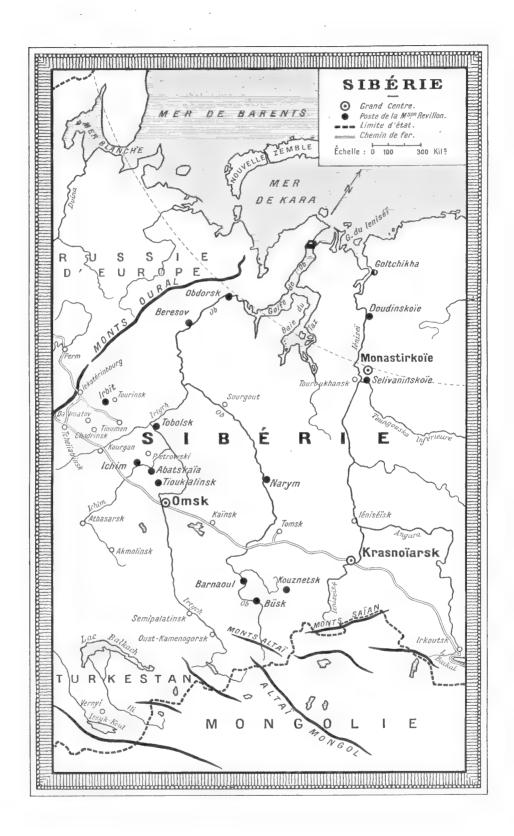
But the members of the expedition were not easily

discouraged. Obstacles were surmounted and they succeeded in establishing a firm base in Bokhara and in bringing back in July about 50,000 Persian lamb skins. They returned home by the Caucasus, and the Black and Mediterranean Seas.

To handicap this foreign enterprise, the Emir's Government put the practically prohibitive tax of 50 kopecks on each Persian lambskin bought in Bokhara by foreigners. But they failed to reckon with the resourcefulness of the people against whom this stroke was levelled. As this new measure would not come into force until the spring of 1906, the REVILLON Company decided to open an office in Moscow, in Sredni Riady, the centre of the wholesale This new branch, bearing a Russian name, could buy in Bokhara without having to pay the tax. In reality the Moscow office was under the direction of Messrs. BUDE-LOT and BRANDIER, assisted by a few employees and one book-keeper. The original aim was the purchase of furs, but it soon began to sell furs collected by the Company in Canada, and this selling department speedily became so important that in 1908 the managers found it necessary to move their premises to Kousnetzky Moste, right in the fashionable business quarter of Moscow.

The Astrakhan purchase system was now thoroughly well organised and the business ran smoothly. To continue the development of the full programme it was necessary to establish contact with the Siberian collectors and thus obtain direct all the furs to be found in that prolific territory — squirrel, red and white fox, sable, ermine, kolinsky, etc. The system in vogue in Canada was adaptable to Siberian conditions, and once the base station had been established, the creation of local posts was a rapid process.

Of Siberian towns, Krasnoyarsk offered the best prospects for headquarters. Situated in Central Siberia, with



a population at that time of 30,000, it is an important station on the Trans-Siberian Railway, and is built on the banks of the large River Yenisei which flows from the Chinese frontier to the Arctic Ocean. Krasnoyarsk is therefore in direct touch with north and south of Siberia through the river, and with the east and west through the railway. It possessed all the advantages of position which had made Edmonton so useful in Canada.

Between 1908 and 1910, the whole Yenisei district was sown with posts on similar lines to those in Canada. The first trading post was established at Touroukansk on the Yenisei, near the Arctic Circle, the second at Narym, north of Tomsk, on the River Obi. The Touroukansk post was superseded by a post at Selivanino (Monastirskoe) on the opposite bank of the Yenisei, at the mouth of the River Nijnaia Tongouska, which flows for 1,250 miles from west



The principal gate of Boukhara.



The first REVILLON FRÈRES "Zavode" in Boukhara (1905).

to east, traversing almost the whole of the Yenisei district. This arrangement enabled the REVILLON posts to collect skins from the Tongouze natives who, as soon as the thaw came, brought in their little boats the furs they had trapped in their distant country during the winter.

Business relations with these natives were not too easy and extremely slow. They are exceedingly suspicious, and entered into long discussions and inquiries before they grew more confident. By degrees they developed so much familiarity that they would use the agent's bed and even his pipe! Confidence having thus been established, the business of exchange went forward, the Tongouzes choosing the most diversified commodities—sugar, biscuits, clothing, tobacco, knives, traps, rifles, powder, lead, etc., to which they often added some gaudy cloths and even eau de Cologne. Not infrequently they took a fancy to European suits and bowler hats, which immensely pleased their



REVILLON FRÈRES post at Monastirskoe, during the Winter.

wives on their return to their distant villages hidden in the tundra.

Then the long, long Polar night enfolded the post buried under a shroud of snow. The post was situated in a village which contained other huts, a church, and even the dwelling of the Government official, the "pristaf" or head of the police of the district. But all these buildings were scattered over a wide area, and the isolation was complete. As to security of person and property, it could hardly be said to exist. For though the greater number of the Siberian exiles who inhabited this region were peaceful people condemned for political offences, others were actual criminals whose company was not always pleasant. In 1909, for instance, these criminals organised a band and put the villages to ransom. One night, they attacked the Revillon post at Monastirskoe, wounded the agent severely, and carried off the safe containing 30,000 roubles into

the "tundra" or bush. It should be added that the Russian authorities immediately sent a force of Cossacks in pursuit of the band, and that the robbers were quickly arrested and hanged. Needless to say, the stolen roubles were never recovered.

In order to complete the purchase system Messrs. Revil-LON organised a scheme of representatives in every town where fur auction sales took place. These sales were held chiefly in connection with the large fairs at Nijni and Irbit.

These fairs have existed in Russia for several centuries. In a country like Russia where the distances are so immense and the means of communication so scanty, it was absolutely necessary to have some centre where business could be transacted and the products of each district exchanged.

As early as the 13th century, a large fair was founded near Kazan in the plain of Arsk. In 1524 it was transferred to Vassilsourk, and in 1641 to Saint-Makarie. In 1816 this fair was destroyed by fire and it was rebuilt in Nijni-Novgorod.

The old city of Nijni-Novgorod is situated on the right bank of the River Oka near its junction with the Volga. With its monasteries, its churches whose domes glitter in the sunshine, and its white houses buried in foliage, the town is a picturesque place, and apart from the thirty days of the annual fair, a tranquil one. But on July 25th when the big fair was opened in the low plain where the Oka and the Volga join their waters, Nijni became an immense caravansera where people of all countries jostled one another, offering their goods and exchanging views in every known language. Over 3,000 Russian and foreign firms were represented in the booths or stands, built on the same plan along immense parallel alleys, crossed regularly at right angles by other streets. Everything produced on Russian soil could be found there: leather, hides, fur

pelts, wool, hair, horsehair, fish, flax, tobacco, and so on were brought in by traders of diversified nationality: Russians, Poles, Caucasians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Siberians, Kirghiz, Persians and Bokhariots.

Transactions were not confined to the fair. In all the numerous hotels and "nomeras" (furnished lodgings) business was feverishly carried on too, and to its remotest corners the town vibrated with frenzied chaffering.

By the middle of September everything was over: shops, banks, warehouses put up their shutters: buyers and sellers returned home: unsold goods were forwarded to Moscow; and the fair, so agitated a few days before, became a city of the dead until the following July.

In addition to this Siberian organisation, the Caucasus, another region famous for its foxes and martens, was not neglected, and Thadée ZABIEHA was successfully entrusted with the fur-buying in that country.

Whilst Russia is a prolific fur-producing land, it must not be forgotten that its rigorous climate made its inhabitants large customers of furs, and plenty of business could be done not merely in the furs of the country, but also in Canadian pelts. Revillon's Moscow agents sent out travellers to the most important cities of Russia — Petrograd, Kieff, Warsaw, Kharkoff and Odessa — and obtained very satisfactory results.

In 1911 the Russian branch had become of sufficient importance to be constituted a self-governing company under the name of REVILLON BRATIA with a capital of 750,000 roubles and authorised by a special Imperial ukase.

The first Board of Directors comprised:

M. Léon REVILLON, as President.

Messrs. Victor REVILLON, Albert REVILLON, BUDELOT and BRANDIER, the last two acting as managing directors.

Soon after, the new Company acquired in Bokhara a

large site on which were built a big factory for the preparation of Persian lambskins, huge warehouses, covering over two and a half acres, for the sorting and shipment



Tongouzes exchanging goods at the REVILLON FRÈRES post of Monastirskoe.

of these skins, and a comfortable residence for the European and native staffs. The difficulties encountered in the early period no longer existed, and between 80,000 and 100,000 Persian lamb skins were collected every year.

In 1913 Krasnoyarsk had become the undisputed centre of all the REVILLON transactions in Siberia and also the distributing warehouse for the supply of the posts. This branch of the work became so important that new premises

were erected for the purpose. The erection was finished in 1915 and was considered the finest building in the town and one of the best in all Siberia.

The development of this Russian business was steady and very profitable. A branch of the Krasnoyarsk depot was opened at Omsk in the midst of the ermine country, and the Revillon Company was enabled to extend its activities to the Minoussinsk, Koutsnetz and Altai districts, and, eastwards as far as Lake Baikal.

When the Great War broke out, steps were being taken to enter Eastern Siberia in the region of Yakoutsk. But the catastrophe put an end to that project and to most of the firm's business. The greater part of the staff was called to the colours, and many heads of departments went to the front, including M. BUDELOT, Mr. Henry PEACOCK and ZABIEHA, the last-named six weeks later, on September 17, 1914, falling on the field of honour at Crouy (Aisne).

In spite of these difficult conditions, the Moscow house pursued its activities under the management of M. Brander, and Krasnoyarsk continued to trade with the Siberian posts under the direction of Mr. Herbert Peacock. The latter acted at the same time as British Consul. Even with the scanty means of transportation available, Moscow supplied Paris with furs until the end of 1917.

Early in 1918 the new political system absolutely annihilated business in European Russia. In March the Moscow house was transferred to Krasnoyarsk, and for the following six months, no communications reached the head office in

Paris from its Russian branches.

However in October of the same year, Captain BUDELOT was sent by the French Government to Siberia. Having completed his mission there, he felt he could not return to France without trying to get some news of his friends in Krasnoyarsk. But railway travelling was exceedingly difficult and tedious. It took six days to go from Omsk to Krasnoyarsk, a distance of only 875 miles. Halts at

the railway stations were unending, for at each stop some of the coaches had to be roughly repaired. Often the train was delayed for hours till an engine capable of pulling it was found. In the already overcrowded carriages, large numbers of natives who had waited for the train for long hours and even days, packed themselves and their belongings. On the way, the trains were in danger of being



REVILLON FRÈRES buyers in China

held up by robbers, who sometimes blew up a munition train or derailed a passenger train for the sake of loot.

Captain BUDELOT collected all the furs which the Northern posts had sent to Krasnoyarsk that year, and these filled a whole carriage. To reach Vladivostok with this precious cargo was no easy matter. The Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk routes were quite as unsafe as on the outward journey. Fortunately Captain BUDELOT secured the kind co-operation of M. REGNAULT, High Commissioner for France, and Colonel Leverve who was in charge of the French Mission for the reorganisation of railroads in Siberia, gave effective help to Captain BUDELOT; and the latter, by cool judgment and good luck, succeeded in bringing these furs intact to Paris in May 1919.

The Russian branch continued to work and even purchase furs in Siberia for a time. But after Koltchak's defeat in 1920 and the fall of Krasnoyarsk, the business had to be closed, and Messrs. Brander and Peacock left the country. They went to Yokohama where they opened a branch which is still carried on under the management of M. Brander, assisted by the two Peacock Brothers<sup>(1)</sup>. This new branch which is, so to speak, the last link in the world-embracing chain of Revillon operations, has started regular transactions with China, and keeps in constant contact with the borders of Eastern Siberia, notably at Harbin, Vladivostok and Nicolaievsk. Two expeditions have been successfully made into Kamchatka under the direction of Mr. Henry Peacock.

Such are the admirable achievements of men whose intelligence and courage were on a par with the importance of the enterprise they represented, and who proved

<sup>(1)</sup> At the time of printing, we hear that Mr Herbert PEACOCK and his wife have been killed in the recent earthquake which destroyed Yokohama. The firm of REVILLON FRÈRES, who has sustained heavy financial losses in this catastrophe, is deeply grieved by the death of such an honest and valuable fellow worker.

themselves worthy rivals of their colleagues in America.

The closing down of the Siberian branches involved the Company in heavy losses. The Krasnoyarsk premises, all the northern posts in Siberia and important stocks of goods, representing a total value of ten million francs, were absolutely lost, or, at least, rendered useless for many years to come.

Fifteen years of untiring effort and of heavy expenditure were wiped out at a blow. But the Company has not lost faith; as soon as circumstances allow and the guarantees are adequate, business will be resumed in Russian territory.





## THE SECRET OF SMOOTH WORKING

N face of the extraordinary diversity of the firm's operations described in the previous chapters, the readers may very properly ask how the smooth working of these world-wide activities has been achieved.

As has been seen in the preceding account, the staffs of the branches comprise men of every nationality. Each type has its good qualities and its deficiencies, and the head office in Paris has to make the best of them by insisting on obedience in vital points, whilst being sufficiently liberal to allow each branch to act for itself and be free to work according to the customs of the country in which it is situated, always provided that the results are satisfactory to the parent house.

REVILLON FRÈRES have therefore combined the centralised methods followed by France towards its Colonies with the more elastic methods which characterise the relations of Great Britain with its Overseas Dominions. The general regulations and control proceed from the Paris house; but each branch has its own Board of Directors, who are appointed by the Paris Board, and who are responsible for the ordinary management of the business in accordance with the customs and commercial methods in vogue in the country where it operates.

From 1904 to 1907 M. Théodore REVILLON was chairman of the Central Board of Directors in Paris. He was succeeded by M. Léon REVILLON, and in 1913 M. Victor REVILLON took charge and still holds this position. We have explained, in the course of our narrative, the part he has taken in the continuous expansion of the Company.

Owing to the growing importance of the American business, it was found essential in 1915 to appoint a Vice-President who would reside in New York and supervise the whole American business of REVILLON FRÈRES. M. Jean REVILLON was elevated to this position, which he still holds.

The President of the Company is ex officio chairman of the Board of every branch and is thus the channel for imparting the decisions and policy of the Head Office to each branch. He has therefore to keep in touch with all the foreign branches, and control their operations by frequent communication as well as by personal visits.

The present Central Board of Directors in Paris is composed as follows:

M. Théodore REVILLON, Honorary Chairman, who in spite of his eighty-four years, continues to watch over the whole business with a clear head and a passionate interest in the firm, of which he is still, in the mind of every member of the staff who knows him, the venerated head.

M. Victor REVILLON, President.

M. J.-M. REVILLON, Vice-President.

M. Pierre Allez, who entered the Company in 1904, was at first entrusted with the management of the retail house in Paris to which he imparted a strong impulse, and since 1918 has taken an important part in the general management of the Paris and London Houses.

Capt. Thierry MALLET, one of the organisers of the Canadian posts, which he continues to inspect every year

is head of the New York House, and personally manages its important retail establishment.

M. René REVILLON, who was at the London branch for some time, and then looked after commercial questions in the New York house. Obliged to return to France, he is a director on the Paris Board.

M. Frédéric Christmann, who has been with the firm since 1882, and became commercial manager in 1911, attending specially to the manufacturing department. He joined the Board in 1922.

M. Emile Chapal, chairman of the Chapal Frères Company, was made a Director in 1923.

We must not omit to mention M. Eugène Blot who has been a member of the staff since 1869 and joined the Board in 1905.

The Board also calls in to assist its deliberations M. Eugène Choque, secretary of the Board since 1904, and manager of the book-keeping department; and M. Gaston Budelot, general manager of the Russian branches, who became General Secretary in 1922.

The Boards of Directors in the various branches are the following:

ENGLAND: REVILLON Frères (LONDON) Ltd.

Chairman: M. Victor REVILLON;

Directors: Messrs. Pierre ALLEZ (Paris representative);

H. R. Cross;

J. A. Bonhomme;

PACKER.

REVILLON TRADING Co (LONDON) Ltd.

Chairman: M. Victor Revillon;

Directors: Messrs. H.-R. Cross;

P. J. ARPIN:

J. A. Bonhomme;

H. D. Foster.

#### UNITED STATES: REVILLON, INC.

President: M. Victor REVILLON.

Vice-President: Messrs. J. M. REVILLON;

Thierry MALLET; Paul J. ARPIN;

Directors: The above and Messrs. W. Redmond Cross and Maurice Leon.

#### REVILLON FRÈRES, New York.

President: M. Thierry MALLET;

Vice-President: P. J. ARPIN:

Secretary Treasurer: M. Tudor AMSTEL;

Directors: The above and Messrs. Victor Revillon and J. M. Revillon.

# CANADA: REVILLON FRÈRES TRADING C° LTD. (Montreal)

President: M. Victor REVILLON;

1st Vice-President: M. Thierry MALLET;

2nd — M. S. H. Coward;

Directors: The above and M. J. M. REVILLON;

Secretary Treasurer: M. E. MELLOR.

### REVILLON WHOLESALE LTD. (Edmonton)

President: M. J. M. REVILLON;

Vice-President: Mr. J. E. Brown:

Directors: The above and Messrs. Victor REVILLON and

S. H. COWARD.

Secretary Treasurer: M. W. R. BOTTOM.

The Paris house with its large departments and numerous staff is under the direct control of the Board of Directors. The President supervises the general management with Messrs. Allez and Christmann as assistant directors.

Moreover the whole business is controlled by four com-

mittees, presided over by Mr. Victor REVILLON, or a member of the Board, assisted by the General Secretary who acts as connecting link between the various Committees.

- 1. The Committee of Direction. Meets daily and is attended by:
  - M. CHOQUE;
- M. Charles ROGER, who is head of all internal affairs and has been with the Company since 1881: and the following who were invited by the Board in 1922 to take part once a week in this meeting.
- M. Emile DARGENT, who looked after the Travellers' Department, and in 1922 was appointed director of the manufacturing department;
  - M. Robert Coubé, head of the Retail Department;
  - M. Louis DUVAL, head of the Skins Department.
- 2. Technical Committee. Meets daily and deals with all questions concerning purchases, comparison of prices, estimate of goods, dressing and dyeing: is attended by:
- M. Henri Déséglise, who has assisted M. Victor Revil-LON in all matters of buying for many years with great ability;

Messrs. Bodier, Duval, Froger;

Mr. Victor HOPE who represents the Company at the London auction sales.

Once a week Messrs. LOLLEY, PICHARD, RICHARD JACQUES, heads of different sections of the Skins Department, attend the meeting and give their views on the matters under discussion.

3. Commercial Committee. — Takes place twice a week to discuss all matters connected with sales to the various classes of customers. All the heads of the selling departments attend it, viz:

Messis. Coubé, Dargent, Duval, Esnol, Fourrier, Gerber, Lefebvre, Orange, Prentout.

4. Federation Factory Committee. — This factory is under the management of M. André JAVEY. Once a week a meeting is held there to examine the numerous matters arising out its management.

Mention should also be made of the opening at Vierzon (Cher) in 1912 of a large factory which is under M. Roussel's management, and is supervised by the head of the Manufacturing Department in Paris.

From all that has been stated above, it can easily be understood that this sub-division of labour conduces to continuous effort, as individual management, which is bound sooner or later to come to an end, is substituted management by a group, which is enduring, for vacancies are immediately filled by men of equal merit to those who have died or retired. The guiding idea is perpetuated in the group system, the labour of past generations is carried forward by their successors, and thus immortality is guaranteed to the toils of two centuries.



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